

# KĀLIDĀSA

—A STUDY

BY

PROF. G. C. JHALA, M. A.



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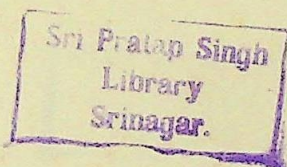
# KĀLIDĀSA

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PROF. G. C. JHALA, M. A.

*St. XAVIER'S COLLEGE, Bombay ;  
University Teacher in Sanskrit,  
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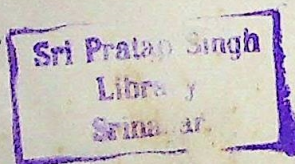
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KĀLIDĀSA—A Study  
First Published, July, 1943.

acc: no: 13595

Pgs 3-40

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Printed by V. R. Sawant at the Associated Advertisers & Printers Ltd.  
505, Arthur Road, Tardeo, Bombay 7, and published by I. D. Kotwal for  
Padma Publications Ltd., 53-55, Laxmi Building, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta Road,  
Bombay.



DEDICATED

in Grateful Memory

to the late

Rev. Dr. R. Zimmermann, S. J., Ph. D.,  
Professor of Sanskrit, St. Xavier's College,

Bombay,

by his pupil.





## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

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We have great pleasure in publishing this monograph on Kālidāsa which was originally intended to be the second number in our *Life and Letters* Series. As, however, the work progressed, it became increasingly clear that, if justice was to be done to the subject, it would not be possible to accommodate it in the said series. Hence its publication as a separate book.

However, the book fulfils the aims and objects of our *Life and Letters* Series, which as already announced are to make easily available to the generality of our readers definite authoritative information about the distinguished sons of India, both ancient and modern, who by their achievements in their respective fields of activity have helped and are helping to create the Glory that was—and is to be—Ind. One of these, to be sure, is Kālidāsa, the High Priest at the shrine of classical Indian Poesy. His name has a universal appeal; and his works, as the author observes about the *Śākuntala*, have almost a nostalgic effect upon the Indian mind. And yet how many of us have any clear ideas about the poet's life and art? A book like the present one which is comprehensive in the outline of its subject matter and yet not too scholarly in its treatment would be very helpful to all those who are desirous of acquainting themselves with our rich heritage. Written in a flowing and graceful style, the book will be found interesting to the lay reader and absorbing to the University student. The former will be charmed by the unfolding of the beauty and rich imagery of Kālidāsa's works while the latter will greatly benefit by the criticisms offered thereon. The controversial questions such as Kālidāsa's date, Prakrit stanzas in the fourth Act of *Vikramorvaśīya*, the indebtedness

of Aśvaghoṣa to Kālidāsa and many others have been exhaustively and critically dealt with, yet the interest nowhere wanes and throughout the reader remains in the idyllic atmosphere of Kālidāsa's creations. The work has been further enriched by the inclusion of a number of verses from Kālidāsa's poems and plays—some revealing his mastery over language, some showing his classic imagination, while some others pointing to his scholarship and a few his philosophy.

The book has behind it, the study and experience of the author who is a professor of Sanskrit of nearly fifteen years' standing at one of the foremost colleges in the Presidency. Prof. Jhala's *Aśvinā in the R̥gveda* has been looked upon by Dr. F. O. Schrader, University of Keil, Keil, Germany, as "an excellent contribution to Vedic research" and as having "hardly anything unacceptable." His editions of the *Raghuvamśa* VI-X and Jagannātha's *Bhāminīvilāsa* I and IV have been received warmly by the scholastic fraternity.

This book will have served a useful purpose if its careful perusal inspires the reader to go to the original sources and appreciate the beauty and charm of Kālidāsa's creations.

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## P R E F A C E

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When, at the invitation of Messrs. Padma Publications Ltd. to contribute a small volume on Kālidāsa in their *Life and Letters* Series, I undertook to write this monograph, I had two conditions to fulfil: one, the book was intended for the lay reader; and, second, it was not to exceed a certain page limit. The latter condition has been violated because the book as it is now published far exceeds the originally contemplated size. It could hardly be otherwise if a book on Kālidāsa such as this one is to claim anything like completeness—not, indeed, of treatment but—of outline of the various problems and aspects of the subject matter. This book briefly deals with the different aspects—historical and critical—of Kālidāsa's life and works. The fact that it is intended for the general reader has necessitated the substitution of the austere impersonal style of a scientific work by one more direct and personal. The summaries of the contents of the different works are not merely factual—they are rather given in detail and are intended to give the reader glimpses into the beauty of conception or richness of imagination of the poet and thus to stimulate his curiosity to see the originals. Quotations in Sanskrit are not infrequently given. They can be passed over by a reader who does not know Sanskrit: the continuity of the matter in English would not be affected. There is sufficient critical matter in the book which will be useful to University students. Indeed, it may be modestly claimed that the book is not without interest to advanced students of Kālidāsa.

I tender my thanks to Hillebrandt, Keith, Ryder, Nandargikar, Pandit and other scholars whose works have

been consulted by me in the preparation of this work. I am greatly indebted to my esteemed friend and colleague, Prof. K. M. Shembavnekar, M.A., whose article, *The Date of Kālidāsa*, deserves to be better known. I mention with pleasure the name of my young friend and pupil, Mr. B. H. Bhukhanwala, B.A., LL.B., who has taken keen interest in the present work and has besides obliged me by correcting the proofs. Finally, the Associated Advertisers' & Printers Ltd. deserve my best thanks for the neat elegant printing of mixed characters and diacritical marks.

*St. Xavier's College,  
Bombay,  
10th June, 1943.*

G. C. J.



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## IMPORTANT ABBREVIATIONS

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Rtu.	...	Ṛtusamhāra
Kumār.	...	Kumārasambhava
Megh.	...	Meghadūta
Raghu.	...	Raghuvamśa
Mālav. or Mālavik.	...	Mālavikāgnimitra
Vik.	...	Vikramorvaśīya
Śak.	...	Abhijnānśākuntala
Buddh.	...	Buddhacarita
Kathā.	...	Kathāsaritsāgara

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# KĀLIDĀSA

## I

### WHEN DID HE LIVE ?

If it were possible for Kālidāsa to come down to us and interest himself in the problems of literature and literary history of today, he is certain to be amazed at the bewildering number and variety of views that have been held about his own time and person. He will stare with incredulity on being told that attempts were made to assign him to the eleventh century A. D. as a Court poet of King Bhoja of Dhārā. He will in all likelihood feel tickled when informed that his patron, Vikramāditya, whose name the Vikrama era bears, was none other than King Yaśodharman who, in order to commemorate his victory over the Śakas in 544 A.D., not only started a new era but sought to lend it greater glory by antedating it by 600 years ! He will be intrigued to learn that his covert reference to his rival Dingnāga in *Megh.* 14 has been well understood and that this Dingnāga is identified as the Buddhist logician who lived about the fifth century A.D. One can well imagine his reactions when he is told that he had flourished in the sixth century A.D. or the fifth or probably the fourth or even the third or, finally, in the first century B.C. It would be hardly surprising if in the face of this array of views about the time when he lived he were to refuse to open his mouth on this question—even to-day.

The fact of the matter is that this 'prince among Sanskrit poets and dramatists' has scrupulously avoided all reference to his family or friends or incidents in his own life, save the bare mention of his name in the Prologues of his three plays. Out of modesty, or what is more probable, following the custom prevailing in his days, he has maintained a total silence about

his personal life which, had it been described ever so casually, might have furnished us with at least some definite information about him and spared scholarship not a little of the pains it has taken so unsuccessfully to acquire it. Consequently, popular imagination has got busy all these centuries telling various stories and inventing legends purporting to embody various incidents in the life of the poet. For instance, one legend says that Bhavabhūti, the celebrated dramatist, took his drama *Uttararāmacarita* after its completion to Kālidāsa and, after reading the same before him, asked for suggestions. Kālidāsa complimented Bhavabhūti on his work and added that he had only one suggestion to make in the verse,

किमपि किमपि मन्दं मन्दमासत्तियोगा-

द्विरलितकपोलं जल्पतोरक्रमेण ।

अशितिलपरिरम्भव्यापृतैकैकशेषो-

रविदितगतयामा रात्रिरेवं व्यरंसीत् ॥ —*Uttar.* 1.27

(While we, resting closely together, cheek to cheek, with one arm of each engaged in close embrace, whispered 'sweet nothings' in very gentle tones, the night thus ended without our noticing how the watches passed by): In the last line एवं should be changed to एव (The line will then mean: 'Night itself came to an end without our noticing how the watches passed by'). What a heightening of the beauty of the description by the smallest of changes! This story, however, can hardly be true, as Bhavabhūti is known to have flourished about the first quarter of the eighth century A.D., while Kālidāsa who is mentioned in the Aihole Inscription of 634 A.D. cannot be later than the sixth century A.D., Another story says how Kālidāsa, Bhavabhūti and Daṇḍin once saw a youthful girl playing with a ball and how each one of them gave his own description of the ball in single stanzas. Entertaining as these spicy legends are, they are obviously worthless for the purposes of the literary historian. The *Bhojaprabandha*



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of Ballālasena which is full of episodes recounted about Kālidāsa at the Court of Bhoja is only a fabrication and therefore useless in the present connection. As it is, we are left to depend only on external evidence for the purpose of ascertaining the poet's date and utilise his works for gathering whatever information we can about him. The question of Kālidāsa's date has since long become one of the most important problems of literary history and scholars, both Indian and foreign, have tried to tackle it with a zeal and assiduity which are truly remarkable. The problem has become highly complex by reason of the variety of arguments advanced and conclusions reached : here we shall consider it only briefly.

Any view which puts Kālidāsa later than the sixth century A.D. is clearly inadmissible, for we have definite evidence before us to show that he could not have lived later. Bāṇa in his *Harṣacarita* mentions Kālidāsa and pays a handsome tribute to his poetry in the verse :

निर्गतासु न वा कस्य कालिदासस्य सूक्तिषु ।  
प्रीतिर्मधुरसान्द्रासु मञ्जरीष्विव जायते ॥

In *Harṣacarita* Bāṇa gives a description of his patron, Śrī Harṣa, who is unanimously identified as Śrī Harṣa of Kanouj who ruled over Northern and Central India from 606 to 647 A.D. This, therefore, settles the date of Bāṇa as the first half of the seventh century. Belonging practically to the same period of time is the evidence of the Aihole Inscription of Ravikīrti who in highly wrought verse glorifies his patron Pulakeśin II and aspires to vie with Kālidāsa and Bhāravi in poetic fame : cf:

येनायोजि नवेद्म स्थिरमर्थविधौ विवेकिना जिनवेद्म ।  
स विजयतां रविकीर्तिः कविताश्रितकालिदासभारविकीर्तिः ॥

The Inscription is dated 634 A.D. The lower limit of Kālidāsa's date is therefore fixed at the sixth century A.D. This limit will have to be pushed higher still when we take

into consideration the evidence of the Mandasor Inscription of Vatsabhaṭṭi which commemorates the repairs done to a Sun-temple at Daśapura (modern Dasor or Mandasor in Mālwa) by the guild of weavers who originally hailed from Gujarat and is dated 472 A.D. Some of the verses of this Inscription are similar to and reminiscent of the verses of Kālidāsa's *Rtusamhāra* and *Meghadūta*.

cf.

चलत्पताकान्यबलासनाथान्यत्यर्थशुक्लान्यधिकोन्नतानि ।  
तडिल्लताचित्रसिताभ्रकूटतुल्योपमानानि गृहाणि यत्र ॥

—Vatsabhaṭṭi, 10

and

विद्युत्स्वन्तं ललितवनिताः सेन्द्रचापं सचित्राः  
सङ्गीताय प्रहतपुरजाः स्निग्धगम्भीरघोषम् ।  
अन्तस्तोयं मणिमयभुवस्तुङ्गमभ्रंलिहाग्राः  
प्रासादास्त्वां तुलयितुमलं यत्र तैस्तैर्विशेषैः ॥ —Megh. 66

Also cf.

स्मरवशागतरुणजनवल्लभाङ्गनाविपुलकान्तपीनोरु-  
स्तनजघनघनालिङ्गननिर्भस्मिततुहिनहिमपाते ॥

and

—Vatsabhaṭṭi, 33

पयोधरैः कुङ्कुमरागपिञ्जरैः सुखोपसेव्यैर्नवयौवनोष्मभिः ।

विलासिनीभिः परिपीडितोरसः स्वपन्ति शीतं परिभूय कामिनः ॥

—Rtu. 5.9

The resemblances of which there are not a few are too close to be ignored or considered accidental ; and it is generally believed that " the clumsy verses of an obscure poetaster " who confesses to having made " efforts " to compose them are inspired by the superior elegant verses of the great poet ; and therefore Vatsabhaṭṭi is indebted to Kālidāsa. This means that Kālidāsa must have lived, at the latest, before the latter half of the fifth century A.D. X



Hence the attempt that was made to fix Kālidāsa's date on the strength of the mention of Dingnāga in *Megh.* 14 must be considered unavailing, and that for other reasons as well. Mallinātha, the commentator, suggests that in this stanza Kālidāsa refers, under cover of *paronomasia*, to a friend Nicula and a hostile critic Dingnāga. Scholars seized upon this suggestion of a commentator who was far removed in time from Kālidāsa and set about identifying Dingnāga. The only Dingnāga known for a very long time was a Buddhist logician who was assigned to the sixth century A.D. and so Kālidāsa, being looked upon as a contemporary of Dīnganāga, was considered to have flourished at that time. This argument is in itself open to various objections. Kālidāsa as a rule does not indulge in *double entendre*, and therefore it is highly improbable that he does so in the present case. Even if the pun is allowed, it is difficult to see how a Buddhist logician and a poet as such can have anything to quarrel about. Besides, the date of Dingnāga is not yet unanimously agreed upon, and is variously placed at the beginning of the sixth century A.D. or about 450 A.D. or, as Keith positively insists, not later than 400 A.D. But the entire argument based upon the identity of Dingnāga is vitiated by the discovery of *Kundamālā*, a drama whose author is Dingnāgācārya. The author of *Kundamālā* cannot be a Buddhist because in the benedictory stanzas he praises Heramba (Gaṇeśa) and Śiva which no Buddhist writer can be imagined to do. Therefore, if Kālidāsa does intend an implied reference to a contemporary Dingnāga, we have to reckon with the possibility of that Dingnāga being some one other than the disciple of Vasubandhu.

Equally unsuccessful is the theory of Prof. K. B. Pathak who argued that in describing the Triumphal March (*Digvijaya*) of Raghu in *Raghu.* 4 Kālidāsa refers to the defeat of the Hūṇas on the banks of the Vamkṣu *i.e.* the Oxus. As the Hūṇas who were settled in the region of the Oxus about 450 A.D. had swooped down on India immediately afterwards as



the Girnar Rock Inscription of Skandagupta shows, Kālidāsa must have composed the poem soon after 450 A.D. Whatever cogency this argument might otherwise have had is vitiated by the fact that there is another reading *Sindhu* in place of *Vamkṣu*. Moreover, could Kālidāsa who revels so much in the description of mountains, rivers and places of India and who never misses any opportunity for such description—could he have altogether ignored the mighty Indus in his description? The poet's ambition in the description of Raghu's March is to describe India; it is therefore impossible that he should have essayed to describe so distant a river as the Oxus. Apart from the philological equation *Vamkṣu*=*Oxus* which is not universally accepted, it may be pointed out that the Oxus region has never been known for the growth of saffron which Kālidāsa mentions in this connection. Saffron, as is well known, grows abundantly in Kashmir, and therefore, the *Vamkṣu*, even if that be the authentic reading, cannot be a river that does not flow through that country.

Besides, Kālidāsa's aim in describing the *Digvijaya* of Raghu is necessarily poetical presentation rather than historical reality. The description is cast broadly in the traditional knowledge about countries and people such as are met with in the *Mahābhārata* or the *Purāṇas*. Bühler's remarks on this question are quite pertinent: "In the face of these facts it is hard to believe that Kālidāsa, instead of following, as a good Kavi is supposed to do, the authority of the lists of people in the *Mahābhārata* or of the *Bhuvanavinyāsa* in the *Purāṇas*, should have occupied himself with historico-geographical investigation regarding the conditions of the frontier people of his times. The whole of the *Digvijaya* contains no names which are not also named in the *Purāṇas* on similar occasions. It also mentions, side by side, peoples like the Pārasikas, the Yavanas, the Hūṇas and the Kāmbojas, which can never justly belong to the time of the poet, why, even to no single period of time whatever."



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(Tradition has always associated Kālidāsa with King Vikramāditya, the destroyer of the Śakas ; and as the internal evidence from Kālidāsa's works corroborates this view, it is accepted by scholars as a starting point in their pursuit of this problem. The title of Kālidāsa's drama *Vikramorvaśīya* contains the word *Vikrama* which, against the usual custom, is not the name of the hero who is called *Purūravas* in the play. It is conceded therefore, that the word is used by the poet on purpose to pay compliments to his own patron *Vikramāditya* by punning upon it, for *Vikrama* also means valour. Moreover, the same word is used by the poet in the body of the drama twice, whereby clearly enough he intends to convey significant suggestions highly complimentary to his patron : अनुत्सेकः खलु विक्रमालङ्कारः । (Act I) [Modesty is indeed the adornment (distinguishing feature) of valour (or *Vikrama*) ] ; दिष्ट्या महेन्द्रोपकारपर्याप्तेन विक्रममहिम्ना वधंते भवान् । ( Act I ) [Congratulations to you on the glory of valour ( *Vikrama* ) which is sufficient to lay the great *Indra* under obligation]. The import of these suggestions can hardly be missed. Scholars therefore have cast about in order to find out who this *Vikramāditya* was. The issue is made difficult by the fact that according to traditional accounts King *Vikramāditya* flourished at Ujjain, defeated the Śaka hordes and started an era in 56 B.C. which is even now associated with his name ; but no historical evidence about the existence of such a king in the first century B.C. has been forthcoming. Not only that the problem is further complicated by the fact that the era which is now known as the *Vikrama* era is not found to bear that name in the early centuries of the Christian era but is called the *Mālava* era in some of the Inscriptions of the Gupta period (cir. 300—500 A.D.). If the popular account of the starting of the era was correct, and if the era was founded to commemorate the glory of king *Vikramāditya*, it should have been known as such during the following centuries. As a matter of fact, the era is not known as the *Vikrama* era until, as far as our present knowledge goes, the ninth century A.D.



Relying upon a verse which enumerates the "nine gems"—Kālidāsa being one of them—that adorned the Court of King Vikramāditya, Sir W. Jones concluded that this Vikramāditya was the founder of the era in 56 B.C. Fergusson put forward the view that the founder of the Vikrama era was Harṣa Vikramāditya of Ujjain who inflicted a severe defeat on the Śakas in the battle of Korur in 544 A.D. and who in order to commemorate this splendid achievement, not only started an era but, with a view to lend it greater antiquity, ante-dated it by 600 years. [Another view identifies Vikramāditya with King Yaśodharman of Malwa who along with Bālāditya of Magadha, subjugated the Śakas in the sixth century A.D. Still another view identifies Kālidāsa with King Mātṛgupta of Kashmir who was a friend of Harṣa Vikrama of Ujjain and, as the latter flourished in the sixth century A.D., Kālidāsa, too, must be assigned to that period.]

At present all this controversy about the poet's date may be said to have boiled down to two rival views : the traditional theory of the first century B.C. and the fourth century A.D. theory or, briefly, the "Gupta—Theory." The very existence of a Vikramāditya in the first century B.C. having become problematical as shown above, scholars searched historical material for a Vikramāditya and discovered that Chandragupta II of the Gupta dynasty had assumed the title *Vikramāditya*. And so the view was propounded that the Vikramāditya who was the patron of Kālidāsa and whom the latter glorified in his implied references in the *Vikramorvaśīya* was none other than Chandragupta II whose Imperial reign lasted from 375 to 413 A.D., who, as epigraphic testimony shows, was a very brave, generous and accomplished King, who defeated the Kṣatrapas—the Śakas—of Malwa, Gujarat and Kathiawar about 395 A.D., who enlarged the kingdom by his conquests, who, having transferred his capital from Pātalipuṭra to Ujjain, assumed the proud title of *Vikramāditya*, and who bequeathed his glory to posterity by lending his title *Vikrama* to



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the Mālava era and rechristening it as the Vikrama era. Although the career of Kālidāsa is variously placed as lying in the reigns of Chandragupta II and his son Kumāragupta or in those of the latter and his son Skandagupta, yet a large body of critical opinion is agreed in believing him to have flourished generally during the Gupta period. Once the hypothesis was formed, all manner of evidence was adduced in support of it: that Kālidāsa frequently uses the root *कु* (to protect); that the frequent use of the word *Kumāra* and the title of his poem *Kumārasambhava* are intended to convey a covert reference to the prince Kumāragupta; that the reference to the Aśvamedha sacrifice in the *Mālavikāgnimitra* is intended to remind us of Samudragupta's *Horse-sacrifice*, that Raghu's *Digvijaya* is only an echo of the resounding victories of Samudragupta and Chandragupta II; that the works of Kālidāsa breathe an atmosphere of peace and prosperity which reigned indeed during the Gupta period; that the glorious description of Ujjayinī in *Megh.* 30 ff. is based on the opulence of that capital of Chandragupta II; that *Ritusamhāra*'s gay atmosphere and *Megh.*'s references to the *amours* of the youthful gallants of Ujjayinī have their source in the gaiety of the people in the metropolis; that Kālidāsa upholds the Brahmanical order of life which was rehabilitated by the Gupta Emperors, etc. etc. In addition, it was contended that Kālidāsa uses astronomical terms like *जानि* and the names of the Zodiacal Signs which are of Greek origin, and, therefore, he cannot be placed earlier than the third or the fourth century A.D.; that he is later than the dramatist Bhāsa who could not have flourished before the beginning of the Christian era; that the works of Kālidāsa and Aśvaghoṣa, a Buddhist philosopher, contain certain parallel passages which the former borrowed from the latter; and, as Aśvaghoṣa lived in the first century A.D., Kālidāsa must necessarily be later, etc.

A formidable array of arguments, indeed. And yet let us scan the foundation on which this superstructure rests.



Chandragupta II [was the grandson of Chandragupta I. The latter originally inherited a small kingdom in the Magadha Country, but being a man of vision and ambition, he contracted an alliance with the powerful clan of the Licchavis of Vaiśālī by marrying Kumāradevī, a Licchavi princess. Thus fortified by this alliance, Chandragupta I proceeded to conquer the adjoining territories, succeeded in enlarging his kingdom, and assumed the title *Mahārājādhirāja*, and, to underline his greatness, started an era in 320 A.D. which came to be known as the Gupta era. He was succeeded by his son Samudragupta who continued the work of expanding the kingdom by attacking and overpowering many kings in Northern and Eastern India, made excursions into Southern India and crowned his glories as a king and conqueror by the performance of an *Aśvamedha* sacrifice.

Samudragupta died about 375 A.D. and was succeeded by his son Chandragupta II. However, if the testimony of the extracts so far published from *Devīcandraguptam*, a drama ascribed to Viśākhadatta, has any value, it would appear that Samudragupta was succeeded by his son Rāmagupta who in a fight with a Śaka King could save his people and himself only by accepting the humiliating condition of sending his own queen Dhruvadevī (or Dhruvasvāminī) into the enemy's harem. Chandragupta, his younger brother, went to the Śaka king in the disguise of Dhruvadevī, pounced upon him and killed him. Later on, he brought about the death of Rāmagupta, usurped the vacant throne and married his brother's wife Dhruvadevī, who was already attracted by his valour. After accession to the throne, he marched against Western Kṣatrapas of Malwa, Gujarat and Kathiawar and brought them to their knees. Like his grandfather, he, too, cemented a political alliance with the Vākāṭakas of Berar by offering his daughter Prabhāvatīguptā in marriage to Rudrasena II, the son of the Vākāṭaka King Prthvīsenā. Having thus consolidated his empire, Chandragupta II trans-



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ferred his capital to Ujjain and assumed the title of *Vikramāditya*.

This brief background is necessary for a proper understanding and appreciation of the validity of the theory that Chandragupta II associated his name with the era which since then was known as the Vikrama era. Now, it will be readily admitted that theories, however plausible in themselves, cannot ignore, much less run counter to, probabilities. No amount of theoretical argument, however passionately advanced or however often repeated, will be of any avail in proving its contention if the inherent probabilities of the situation go against it. In the present case, the protagonists of the 'Gupta theory' do not appear to have considered whether it was probable for Chandragupta II practically to start a new era after his own name, when his illustrious grandfather had already started the Gupta era only a few decades ago. Could Chandragupta II who is held out as a paragon of manly and kingly virtues be so disloyal to the memory of his grandfather and the glory of his family as to disown the era bearing the family's name and lend his name to another one out of what will be little short of vanity? This is a fundamental question and deserves to be treated as such. Secondly, how strange and unnatural it sounds for an emperor, seeking to glorify himself, not to start a new era after his own name but only to seize another already in vogue and lend his name to it! Again, this hypothesis would have had some plausibility if the Vikrama era had been found in vogue in the decades or centuries immediately following; at least it must have been used in the Inscriptions of Chandragupta's successors. But, as we know, the Girnar Rock Inscription of Skandagupta does not mention the 'Vikrama era' but sticks to the Gupta era (cf. गुप्तप्रकाले गणनां विधाय), thus clearly ruling out any change in the normal manner of computation of time then in vogue. The Vikrama era is not met with as such earlier than the ninth century A.D. This could hardly have been



the case if Chandragupta II had lent the dignity of his name to the older era which would then have been generally adopted on account of recent royal association.

The basic argument for the Gupta theory thus proving untenable, it is not difficult to explain and explain legitimately the other arguments advanced to support it. For instance, it may be replied that the root गुप् is used by the poet as frequently as other roots like त्रै, पा, रक्ष, etc., and, wherever he has used it, he has done so generally in a political or legal sense. The mere use of the root गुप् can hardly be interpreted as referring to the Guptas any more than the use of the root शक् by the poet can claim a reference to the Śakas. The word *Kumāra* is not used by Kālidāsa preferentially, but only generally—like the synonyms सुत, पुत्र, आत्मज, etc. which are also used by him. So also about the title of the *Kumārasambhava*; for, in view of the many synonyms गुह, स्कन्द, सेनानी, etc., which are used by the poet, it is difficult to argue that *Kumāra* in the title of the poem is used out of preference. The reference to the *Horse-sacrifice* and the defeat of the Yavanas in the *Mālavikāgnimitra* only echo the historical facts which are known about the founder of the Śunga dynasty and are not imaginary, and therefore cannot be cited in corroboration of the Gupta theory. The argument about Raghu's *Digvijaya* has already been disposed of above. The equivalence of जामित्र and the Greek *Diametron* is contested; and, even if it was of Greek origin, it does not necessarily bring down Kālidāsa's date to the fourth century A.D., for the Greeks and the Indians had come into contact with each other as early as the fourth century B.C., if not a little earlier still. Therefore the use of astronomical terms supposed to be of Greek origin can well be possible within a couple of centuries, i.e., about the first century B.C.

Then, lastly, we come to the question of the priority or otherwise of Āśvaghoṣa to Kālidāsa. Āśvaghoṣa was a Buddhist philosopher who flourished in the first century A.D.

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In his two poetical compositions, *Saundarānanda* and *Buddhacarita*, he has tried to propound, as he himself avers, the tenets of Buddhism in order the better to interest the people therein. In these works of his and those of Kālidāsa there are some resemblances of situation, description and fancy most of which are explainable either as due to the creative powers of the respective authors or as based upon the *Rāmāyaṇa* on which Aśvaghōṣa like Kālidāsa has certainly drawn. But remarkable is the case of verses 13-23 in the third canto of the *Buddhacarita* which have a parallel in verses 56-62 in the seventh canto of *Kumārasambhava* (repeated in the sixth canto of the *Raghuvaṃśa* (cf. Appendix A). These verses contain a description of the rush of women to the windows in order to have a look at the procession that was passing by. Regarding the question as to which one of the two authors, Aśvaghōṣa and Kālidāsa, is indebted to the other, Cowell opined : 'I can hardly doubt that Kālidāsa's finished picture was suggested by the rough but vigorous outlines in Aśvaghōṣa ; he was the Buddhist Ennius who gave the first inspiration to the Hindu Virgil'. This view has been hotly contested. Principal Ray, after an analysis of the parallelisms, concludes : "The suspicion is unavoidable that the ideas are borrowed (by Aśvaghōṣa) from Kālidāsa in whose works they *all* occur, but the context being different, their combination in Aśvaghōṣa has produced a heterogeneous mass". Opinion is thus sharply divided on this issue practically in terms of Kālidāsa's date. The upholders of the 'Gupta theory' look upon Kālidāsa as the borrower because of the finish and elegance of his description ; while those who assign him to the first century A.D. contend that Aśvaghōṣa was more of a philosopher than a poet and therefore his rough unfinished handiwork is due to his inability to match the finish and gracefulness of the great poet whom he tried to imitate.

It would be well to enter a *caveat* against the danger of considering, without sufficient corroborative evidence, a well



written elegant piece of literary composition, *as a rule*, later than another which is rugged and lacking in finish. For, were this universally true, we might have had by now many *super-Meghadūtas*, for instance, in place of the half a dozen inferior imitations thereof. The wind of genius bloweth where—and when—it listeth. There is nothing improbable in Kālidāsa's superior works having supplied the inspiration to Aśvaghoṣa who however could not equal the great master. An indication of the posteriority of Aśvaghoṣa to Kālidāsa is found in the fact that in the first two cantos of the *Saundarā-nanda* and the second canto of the *Buddhacarita* he indulges in an orgy of aorist forms and parades his knowledge of grammatical rules in a manner that is highly artificial and smacks of Bhaṭṭi and other later classical authors. cf:

शमेऽभिरेमे विरराम पापादूभेजे इमं संनिवभाज साधून् ।

—*Buddh.* 2.33

नाध्यैष्ट दुःखाय परस्य विद्यां ज्ञानं शिवं यत्तु तदध्ययीष्ट ॥

or

—*Ibid.* 2.35

In the following stanza;

यत्र स्म मीयते ब्रह्म कैश्चित्कैश्चिन्न मीयते ।

काले निमीयते सोमो न चाकाले प्रमीयते ॥ —*Saund.* 1.15

the form मीयते is used in four different senses and is respectively derived from *mi* to perceive, *mī* to injure, *ma* with *ni* to reap and *mi* with *pra* to die! The forms अवीवपत् and अमीमपत् are used in four different senses. The height of this tendency is reached in *Buddh.* 11.70 where the root अच् is used in nine different senses! Kālidāsa's works are singularly free from this tendency which appears to have gained some considerable vogue in course of time. It is strange indeed that scholars should overlook this difference in style between the two authors, when they deal with the question of the indebtedness of the one to the other and consider Kālidāsa the later of the two, mainly owing to their preconception about the "Gupta Theory".



In fact this hypothesis about the identity of Vikramāditya had its origin in the erroneous interpretation of the phrase मालवगणस्थिति occurring in the Mandasor Inscriptions and the consequent refusal of scholars to believe in the historicity of Vikramāditya who flourished in the first century B.C. The phrase has been interpreted, after Fleet, as the "tribal constitution of the Mālavas", or "the usage of the Mālava tribe," with the result that the Mālava era was believed to have been started by a Mālava Republic, thus cutting at the very roots of tradition which attributed the foundation of the era to King Vikramāditya, and proving him to be only a "mythical king of that name who figures so largely in Indian legends". The natural and correct way of interpretation of the phrase, however, is, as has been shown recently by Prof. K. M. Shembavanekar, "the system of reckoning prevalent in Mālva", मालवगणस्थिति being equivalent to मालवानां गणनापद्धति. This rectification of an erroneous interpretation which has held the field quite so long explodes the theory of the Republican constitution of a Mālava tribe and clears the ground for rendering unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar, i.e., associating the origin of the era with Vikramāditya.

Now, although no historical, epigraphic or numismatic evidence has yet been available placing Vikramāditya's existence beyond all doubt, yet this argument is at best negative, and unless there is sufficient positive evidence disproving his existence, it is scarcely permissible to deny it. Scholars like Vincent Smith and Edgerton have admitted that after all, such a king might have existed at that time. The very fact that Chandragupta II thought it his worthwhile to assume the title *Vikramāditya* indicates that by the fourth century A.D. the name of Vikramāditya of Ujjain had attained to outstanding eminence and popularity. Titles like *Vikramāditya* originally are names of real persons who have risen to outstanding eminence and are afterwards utilized as titles by those who aspire to imitate them, as witness the names of Napoleon or Akbar or Shivaji.



But the existence of Vikramāditya in the first century B.C. cannot be regarded as merely hypothetical for the *Kathā-saritsāgara* which is based on the *Brhatkathā* of Guṇāḍhya who is assigned to the first century A.D. gives an account of Vikramāditya of the Pramāra dynasty who was the Imperial ruler of Ujjain and became the hero of countless legends. The account given in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* is quite likely to be historical and reliable as Guṇāḍhya, the original author, on whose work the *Kathā* is based, was so very near in time to that great hero. Just as Vatsarāja Udayana about whom no historical evidence has come to light cannot be dismissed as mythical merely because the references to him are found in literature, so also Vikramāditya can hardly be dismissed as mythical because of his description in works like Guṇāḍhya's *Brhatkathā* or even Rajput Chronicles. The *Brhatkathā* itself is of course not available; but the account in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* describes him as the son of *Mahendrāditya* of the Pramāra dynasty, Emperor of Ujjain. He was, it is said, an attendant of Śiva, *Mālyavat* by name, sent down to the earth for the extermination of the Mlecchas, the suppression of anti-Vedic creeds and the revival of Brahmanism. He was a devout Śaiva and probably it was he who built the famous shrine of Mahākāla at Ujjain. "During his long and glorious reign there appears to have been that revival of Brahmanism and Brahmanical learning which made Malwa a stronghold against Buddhism and Jainism and at the same time the mother of poets and astronomers."

This Vikramāditya, the founder of the era which eventually came to bear his name, could well have been the patron of Kālidāsa, for Kālidāsa whose leanings towards Śaivism are quite unmistakable might more reasonably be supposed to have lived under the patronage of kings who subscribed to and consolidated Śaivism in Malwa than under the Guptas who were devout Vaiṣṇavas. Kālidāsa uses many grammatical forms which are against Pāṇini's rules which, too, shows



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that he must have flourished at a time when Pāṇini's grammatical system had not yet attained to that supremacy over all other rival systems which ultimately it did. This consideration and the use of antique words by the poet would show that he must have lived much earlier than the third or fourth century of the Christian era.

The title of the drama *Vikramorvaṣīya*, as we have already seen, is chosen by the author in order to glorify his patron. We have also seen how he uses the word *Vikrama* so as to convey significant suggestions. In the same play, the poet repeatedly uses the word महेन्द्र out of the many synonyms of इन्द्र; in some places he does so evidently out of preference. And now we can realize the significance of the repeated use of this epithet, for we learn from the *Kathāsaritsāgara* that Mahendrāditya was the name of the father of Vikramāditya. And some of the sentences in the drama like दिष्ट्या महेन्द्रोपकारपर्याप्तेन विक्रममहिम्ना वर्धते भवान् । and प्रथमं पुत्रदर्शनेन विस्मृतास्मि । इदानीं महेन्द्रसंकीर्तनेन स्मरितः समयो मम हृदयमायासयति (Act V) (I had forgotten it all at first at the sight of my son ; but now being reminded of the condition (समय also means time) by the mention of Indra's name my heart is aggrieved), and रम्भे उपनीयतां स्वयं महेन्द्रेण संभृतः कुमारस्यायुषो यौवराज्याभिषेकः । ('Rambhā, let the ceremony of the crowning of prince Āyus as heir-apparent for which preparations have been made by the great Indra himself be performed)—these sentences bring the names of the father and the son together in such context that their significance could hardly have been missed by the audience in Ujjain before whom the drama was performed—probably at the time of the intended retirement of the old king Mahendrāditya and the coronation of the young prince Vikramāditya. The evidence of the *Vikramorvaṣīya* appears to be almost positive.

The fact that Kālidāsa selected the scions of the Solar dynasty as the heroes of his *Raghuvamśa* can well be understood when we remember that Mahendrāditya and Vikramāditya belonged to a dynasty believed to have been founded by

*Āditya* (the sun). Apart from this there is a good deal of correspondence between the descriptions of King Dilīpa and his son Raghu in the *Raghuvamśa* and the descriptions of Mahendrāditya and Vikramāditya in the *Kathāsaritsāgara*. The evidence of the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, the historical allusion in *Megh.* 30 to the living tradition about Vatsarāja Udayana in Malwa, etc., only go to confirm the conclusion that Kālidāsa must have lived in the first century B.C. at the court of the great emperor of Ujjain—Vikramāditya of the Pramāra dynasty.

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## II

## HIS LIFE AND CHARACTER

Where did Kālidāsa live? As might only be expected, different provinces of India have claimed this 'child' as their own. Kashmir has been long claiming him, basing the claim on the identification of the poet with King Matr̥gupta as mentioned in the last chapter, and reinforcing it in modern times by arguments from internal evidence. Bengal has claimed him and has been making demonstrative protestations about it. The Berars (Vidarbha) have claimed him, Malwa has claimed him and even Ceylon has done so, relying on the story about the friendship of the poet with Kumāradāsa, King of Ceylon. The 'child' however does not speak; it only smiles at the mother who has nursed it and it smiles at Ujjayinī. The tradition about Kālidāsa having flourished at the Court of Vikramāditya of Ujjain apart, his works reveal a certain partiality for the Avanti country with Ujjain as its capital, in whose description, especially in the *Meghadūta*, the poet betrays a passionate filial warmth. He is therefore generally considered to have flourished in Ujjain.

About his family, parents, birth, education, domestic life, career, etc., we have no evidence whatever; and popular tales, however circumstantial, are of little use. According to one of these tales, Kālidāsa was originally a dunce and, by a conspiracy of circumstances, happened to marry a very intelligent princess. When the latter realized that she was married to a dunder-head she rebuked him; whereupon he left home and went to a forest and there propitiated the goddess Kālī in a temple. The Goddess being pleased blessed him with her grace. So Kālidāsa returned home and was at once confronted with the accusing question : अस्ति कश्चिद्वाग्विशेषः । (Is there any improvement in your speech?) And, forsooth,



he immortalised this question by commencing his *Kumāra-sambhava* with the word अस्ति ( अस्त्युत्तरस्यां दिशि, etc. ), *Meghadūta* with कश्चित् ( कश्चिकान्ताविरहगुरुणा, etc. ), and *Raghuvamśa* with वाक् ( वागर्थविव संयुक्तौ, etc. )! The legend is all too ingenious and hardly deserves credence.

Thus, although we have no means wherewith to have a detailed connected account of the life of the poet or a composite picture of his character, yet he has left his 'mind and heart' to us—his poems and dramas which must needs reflect to no small extent his thoughts and feelings, his views on different topics and outlook on life in general. By judicious sifting, it is possible to get glimpses into the character of their author.

At the very first sight Kālidāsa appears from his works to have been a follower of Śaivism, though, of course, we cannot go to the length of saying that he belonged to the प्रत्यभिज्ञा school of Śaivism that flourished in Kashmir. On the contrary his tolerance and catholicity of outlook are clearly revealed by the devotional vein in the panegyric of Viṣṇu in *Raghu*. 10. and of Brahmā in *Kumār*. 2. Indeed, he regards all these gods only as the manifestations of the Highest One, making his religious creed amount to Śaivite Vedānta. Yet, all his works disclose a positive outlook on life—enthusiasm for the good things of life. The air of good cheer and hope and contentment which pervades his works may be due to the affluent circumstances in which this Court poet lived. A high sense of duty and great regard for the social and moral order characterize his dramas as well as poems. His stay at the Royal Court has given him opportunities to study court life and *etiquette* which he has turned to good account in his writings. Ever a man of keen observation and varied interests, he knew and understood the ways and manners of all types of men, kings and sages, elegant cultured city folk and straight-forward hermits, sophisticated city women and simple lassies of the countryside, servants, sepoys, fishermen, etc. He cherished friendship and consecrated love. His simple yet moving



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description of child nature shows the tenderness and sympathy of his heart. His description of Kaṇva's feelings when Śakuntalā is about to leave for her husband's capital shows that he had sounded the very depths of the paternal heart.

He was no less interested in Nature in her variety of aspects and moods. He has described mountains, rivers, cities and countryside, animating them all with life. Lakes with blooming lotus-flowers, trees resounding with the twitter of birds, morning's freshness and evening's quiet repose—these have enthralled our poet. He is struck by the majesty of the ocean. The heavenly luminaries have been a source of inspiration to him. Nature, to him, is instinct with life; and he believes in her sympathy with man.

Let us now turn to Kālidāsa's scholarship. Although he has nowhere enumerated the arts and sciences which he knew, yet his plots, description of incidents and situations, narration, speeches of characters, his similes, metaphors, etc., all these throw sufficient light on the range of his knowledge. He speaks of the Vedic Mantras and their 'Composers'—the sages, refers to the Trinity of the Vedas and knows the nature of the contents and purpose of the Atharvaveda. References to sacrifices are common enough, *e.g.*, the *Horse-sacrifice*, *Viśvajit sacrifice*, *Putreṣṭi*, etc. He describes sacrificial ritual in various places, mentions technical terms and, indeed, in stanzas like *Raghu*. 9.21 reveals such a close acquaintance with the details of the rites that we are forced to the conclusion that he was conversant with the *Brāhmaṇa* literature and *Śrauta* texts. The description of Viṣṇu as the Highest Divinity in *Raghu*. 10 contains much that is reminiscent of the Upaniṣadic conception of a qualityless immutable First Principle. The same hymn clearly shows that Kālidāsa was acquainted with the *Bhagvadgītā*. His faith in Yoga as a means of salvation is seen in a number of descriptions, notably in *Raghu*. 8. 15-24. Bhakti is also recognized by him as a means to the same end. Among other philosophical creeds known to him was Sāṃkhya,



and in one place he refers to a postulate of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika Philosophy, cf. *Raghu*.13.1 His thorough knowledge of Dharmaśāstra is quite obvious. References to the four castes and stages of life, the Samskāras, the duties of the various castes, the Gāndharva and Anuloma marriages, marriage rites, references to the laws of theft and inheritance, levy of taxes, specific mention of Manu as the law giver—such and many other details of Dharmaśāstra topics lie embedded throughout his works. Equally detailed is his use of the Arthaśāstra (science of Politics), whose dicta, apart from the use of terminology in quite a large number of places, are followed with remarkable faithfulness in the first five cantos and the eighth canto of the *Raghuvaṃśa*. His deep study of Kāmaśāstra is seen from all his works, especially from the eighth canto of the *Kumār*. Kālidāsa's indebtedness to the *Rāmāyaṇa* is written on his face. He must have known the story of the *Mahābhārata*, for in *Megh*. 50 he refers to the Kurukṣetra as the plain which was the scene of a battle of Kṣatriyas and where Arjuna, the wielder of the *Gāndīva* bow, destroyed his enemies. He certainly knew *Purāṇic* literature from which he quotes a number of myths and legends.

His mastery over the science of poetics and dramaturgy is only too patent. His skill in handling the Rasas, his alliterations, *Yamakas*, similes, metaphors, puns, *Arthāntaranyāsas*, illustrations and knowledge of poetic conventions display his firm hold on the science of poetics. In *Vik*. 2.18 he mentions the sage Bharata not merely as a dramaturgist but also a director of dramatic performances. In *Mālavik*. he displays his knowledge of the technique of dancing and refers to technical terms like चलित and पञ्चाङ्गमिनय. In *Megh*. 37 he describes the दैशिक type of dance in the temple of Mahākālā. His knowledge of the allied art of music is revealed not only by some ditties in his dramas—let alone the large number of Prakrit verses in the *Vik*.—but by the use of a great many technical terms of music both vocal and instrumental. Another



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fine art which often figures in his works and about which he appears to have more than a mere smattering is painting.

That he was quite at home in grammar and vocabulary and prosody need hardly be mentioned. There is sufficient evidence in his works to show that he was acquainted with astronomy, astrology and medicine. Next, we may refer to his knowledge of history and geography. The first part of the *Meghadūta*, the description of Raghu's *Digvijaya* in *Raghu*.4, the description of some of the suiters of Indumatī in *Raghu*.6 and canto 13 in the same work, besides the description of the Himālaya and Oṣadhiprastha in *Kumāra*., are full of historico-geographical details which show how wide his knowledge about the various places was. Finally, we may note the historical background in his drama, *Mālavikāgnimitra*, which, as is well known, is absolutely faithful in most of its details to history.

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## III

## HIS WORKS—POEMS

When we take up the study of Kālidāsa's works, we find ourselves on far surer ground—of course only after we have answered the question: Which are Kālidāsa's works? "Why", you will reply, "they are seven—the three dramas and the four poems." But that is hardly the whole question. For, there are altogether more than thirty literary compositions—large and small, sacred and secular—going under the name of Kālidāsa. The case of the Indian Shakespeare, in this respect, is the reverse of his English counterpart. For, while the Bard of Avon has been sought to be deprived of the authorship of his works by the 'Baconian Hypothesis,' Kālidāsa, on the contrary, has suffered from the overflowing affection and homage of posterity which has ascribed to him a goodly number of works which were not his own. Indeed, out of the large number of these works, the great majority is spurious. Scholarly opinion is practically unanimous in dismissing as spurious all works except the wellknown seven, viz., *Rtusamhāra*, *Kumārasambhava*, *Meghadūta* and *Raghuvamśa*—all poems, and *Mālavikāgnimitram*, *Vikramorvaśīyam* and *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*—the three dramas. These works of the poet bear an unmistakable affinity of language and thought; in fact, it is possible to discern in them the progressive development and maturation of the poet's genius and art. Obviously, Kālidāsa could not have written, say, the poems first and dramas afterwards or *vice versa*. A comparative study of these compositions shows that *Rtu.* was the first to be written followed by *Mālavik.* and *Kumār.* or *Vik.* His last work was *Raghu.* or, as is more probable, his masterpiece—*Śākuntalam*. For the sake of convenience we shall consider the poems first and the dramas afterwards.



(1) *RTUSAMHĀRA*

This small poem consisting of six cantos was for a time looked upon as a spurious work fathered upon Kālidāsa. It was contended that it is far inferior to Kālidāsa's genuine works in thought and language. Secondly, Mallinātha, the famous commentator of Kālidāsa, has not commented upon it. Nor do the *Alamkāra*-writers cite any verses from it. Finally, its authenticity was called into question on the score of Kālidāsa's ethical quality lacking in it. These arguments have not been successful in winning general acceptance from the world of scholars, because they are explicable otherwise. The inferiority of thought and expression, for instance, will be easily understood if we bear in mind that the *Rtusamhāra* was the very first attempt of the poet at poetic composition. It embodies the work of a novice in the poet's art who is struggling to find ideas and adequate expression to convey them. This circumstance sufficiently accounts for its inferiority. If, therefore, Mallinātha did not comment upon it, it is hardly to be wondered at. The poem is simple—too simple—as a whole for a seasoned commentator like Mallinātha to think it his worthwhile to write a commentary upon. This simplicity helps us, too, to understand why the rhetoricians did not draw upon it at all. Little would they care to utilize this raw effort of the poet, when they had his mature finished works before them. And as for the lack of ethical quality in the poem, it should not be forgotten that it is a juvenile effort at describing Nature in relation to man in terms of love. The youthful artist has faithfully borne the limitations imposed by the choice of theme and purpose.

The poem has survived the Baconian Ordeal and is now generally accepted as a genuine work of Kālidāsa. That it is an old poem is seen from the indebtedness of Vatsabhaṭṭi's Inscription (472 A.D.) to it as shown in the first chapter.

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The poem, as its title suggests, describes the six seasons in as many cantos, the number of verses in the cantos varying



from 18 to 28. It opens with the description of summer—and not Spring, as some wish it should have done. In determining the order of the descriptions, the poet must possibly have argued that he could begin with Spring, the queen of seasons. But then the remaining descriptions would appear tame and even anticlimatic after the *gusto* of the first. If Spring were to end the cycle of the seasons, it would come with a *crescendo* especially because the description was to be in terms of love. He therefore opened the poem with the description of summer “with its blazing sun and charming moon, with its storage of water suitable for baths at all times, pleasant in the evenings and with love subdued.” Cool moon-lit nights, beloveds wearing fine silken garments, their breasts smeared with sandal-paste and anklets tinkling, sparkling wine and charming song—all help to remove the heat and wearisomeness of the hot season. Miserable is the plight of travellers who, “with their hearts burnt by the fire of separation from their beloveds, cannot bear the sight of the earth parched by the fierce sun-shine and having columns of dust raised by unbearable winds” (1.10). After describing the effect of summer on lovers, the poet proceeds to describe how birds and beasts suffer, too, in this season when nature wears a pitiless frown. “The deer scorched by the burning sunshine, with mouths parched by overpowering thirst, run about in the jungle at the sight of the sky resembling powdered collyrium, thinking it to be water”. (1.11) “Birds perched on leafless trees are panting, the herd of monkeys feeling wearied approaches the bower of the mountain, the *Gayals* are roaming about in search of water, and the *Śarabhas* make efforts to drink water from the well:”

श्रसिति विहगवर्गः शीर्णपर्णद्रुमस्थः  
 कपिकुलमुपयाति क्लान्तमद्रेर्निकुञ्जम् ।  
 भ्रमति गवययूथः सर्वतस्तोयमिच्छन्न-  
 शरभकुलमजिह्वां प्रोद्धरत्यम्बु कृपात् ॥ —1.23



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The poet describes how the serpent, the elephant, the peacock, the lion, the boar, the frog, etc., are all feeling the effect of the terrible heat and, with an eye on the conventions of poetic fancy, adds how they even forget their natural animosities. Then follows a vivid description of the forest regions—with water dried up, leaves scorched by the dreary gusts of wind, conflagrations breaking out and spreading around among the trees and creepers and thickets of bamboos. The canto then ends on a soft note :—

व्रजतु तव निदाघः कामिनीभिः समेतो  
निशि सुललितगीते हर्म्यपृष्ठे सुखेन ॥

(May you pass the summer happily in the company of loving women at night on the terrace of the mansion with charming music on.)

Summer is followed by the rainy season which comes “in full splendour like a king with elephants in rut in the form of rain-clouds, banners in the form of lightning and drums provided by the thunder—the rainy season so dear to love-smitten hearts” (2.1). The peacocks dance lustily, rivers in flood rush madly to the sea “like bad women swayed by passion.” What downright realism Kālidāsa has employed in the following verse and how vivid the description is!

विपाण्डुरं क्रीटरजस्तृणान्वितं  
भुजङ्गवद्वक्रगतिप्रसर्पितम् ।  
ससाध्वसैर्भेककुलैर्निरीक्षितं  
प्रयाति निम्नाभिमुखं नवोदकम् ॥ —2.13

(The new water, dirty, full of insects, dust and grass, running in a zig-zag course like a serpent, and eyed by distracted frogs, flows down to a low level.) Love-stricken women go out to meet their lovers during the nights which are darkened by

clouds sending out peals of thunder and in which the path is revealed by the flashes of lightning (2.20). The monsoon excites the love of men with its blooming flowers like Ketakas, Kadambas, Kuṭajas, etc., and women decorating themselves in various ways. Hard indeed is the lot of travellers and their separated loves.

Then follows the Śarad season. It "comes, charming in appearance like a newly-married bride, with a garment of Kāśa flowers, with her beautiful face in the form of full-blown lotuses, delightful with the tinkling sound of anklets in the form of the cackling of exultant swans, and her slender body beautiful and stooping with half-ripe *śālī* rice." (3.1). In Śarad the earth appears white with Kāśa flowers, nights with the moon, the water of the rivers with swans, lakes with moon-lotuses, forest regions with *Saptacchada* trees laden with flowers and gardens with *Mālatī* flowers (3.2). The sky is azure and clear, decked with clouds that are silvery white. Nights are spangled with stars and wear the white silken garment of moon-light. The clear moon, the gentle fragrant breeze and the lotus-lakes rippling with waves serve only to inflame the feeling of love.

In the fourth canto the poet takes up the description of Hemanta with its snow-fall. Women no longer adorn themselves with ornaments for their touch is cold. And yet it is the time when lovers enjoy the bliss of love. In this canto of eighteen stanzas the poet has very little to say in particular about the season. He devotes about half a dozen stanzas to the description of loving women in the morning after the night; and the description is partly imaginative and partly conventional.

Hemanta gives way to winter—the season which is "after the heart of loving women." Now, neither sandal-paste cool like moon-beams, nor the terrace clear like the autumnal moon, nor the breeze cold with freezing frost is welcomed



by men. They like now to stay indoors, welcome fire or sun-rays and heavy raiment, and like the company of youthful ladies. Ladies now overlook the offences of their lovers and take to amorous sports. Like the preceding canto this one, too, contains stanzas describing the condition and activities of women in the morning after the pleasures of night. These two cantos betray a falling off in comparison with the first three.

And then the round of seasons ends with Spring—"the warrior who arrives, equipped with sharp arrows in the form of blooming mango-blossoms and glistening bow-string in the form of the row of bees, to pierce the hearts that are set on conjugal pleasures." "Trees are now in blossom, water is full of lotuses, women full of passion, the breeze fragrant, evenings agreeable, days pleasant—in fact, everything wears a happier look in spring." (6.2). Women put on fine dress dyed with saffron, don girdles and bracelets and anklets, adorn themselves with the seasonal flowers like *Karṇikāra* or *Aśoka* or *Kuravaka* and draw ornamental designs on their faces—well may the poet say, "women now long for the company of their lovers." Spring has influenced even the cuckoo "who flushed with love and intoxicated with the wine of mango-juice kisses his mate," and the humming bee who "settling on the lotus-flower utters 'sweet nothings' to his beloved." (6.14). All Nature is now in resplendent glory; the blossoming trees and creepers "disturb even the minds of the self-controlled, what to say then about the love-beguiled hearts of youth?" (6.23). The poor traveller—in what masterly fashion Kālidāsa describes his plight: "Seeing the mango trees in blossom, the traveller, his mind agonized by the separation from his beloved, closes his eyes, weeps, laments, muzzles the nose with the hand and cries aloud":

नेत्रे निमीलयाति रोदिति याति शोकं  
 घ्राणं करेण निरुणद्धि विरोति चोद्यैः ।  
 कान्तावियोगपरिखिंस्तिचिच्चवृत्ति-  
 ईष्मद्वदगः कुसुमितान् सहकारवृक्षान् ॥—6.26



clouds sending out peals of thunder and in which the path is revealed by the flashes of lightning (2.20). The monsoon excites the love of men with its blooming flowers like Ketakas, Kadambas, Kuṭajas, etc., and women decorating themselves in various ways. Hard indeed is the lot of travellers and their separated loves.

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 घ्राणं क्रेण निरुणद्धि विरोति चोच्चैः ।  
 कान्तावियोगपरिखेदितचित्तवृत्ति-  
 र्दृष्ट्वाध्वगः कुसुमितान् सहकारवृक्षान् ॥—6.26

The canto, like all the preceding ones, ends on a benedictory note.

To the student of the rest of Kālidāsa's works, the *Rtu.* undoubtedly appears amateurish. While the poem reveals the poet's characteristic love of Nature and minute observation, there is on the whole a lack of ideas which is responsible for the many repetitions, round-about expressions and occasional padding. The treatment of Nature and its influence on loving hearts, while occasionally full of freshness and poetic power, lacks throughout that supreme Kālidāsan quality—suggestiveness. The richness and delicacy of diction which we associate with Kālidāsa are not altogether absent. There are some well conceived *similes*, though a faulty one is also found in 4.4†

The *Rtu.* is highly interesting for the fact that in this very first attempt of his the young poet has all but discovered himself. Nature and man are the eternal subjects for the poet. Our youthful poet must have decided early enough to treat both of these in terms of love. Indeed, it is possible that at an early stage Kālidāsa came to have his own conception of love and its place in life; and this he wanted to interpret in his works. This is obvious from the fact that love is the one theme of all his dramas and poems except the *Raghuvamśa* in which, too, it is the dominant, if not the only sentiment. Such a singleness of approach clearly argues a ~~deliberate~~ intention on the part of the poet to body forth in his compositions the conception of love which he had formed himself. While it is true that the depiction of love as found in *Rtu.*

† पादाम्बुजान्यम्बुजकान्तिमाञ्जि । It is interesting to compare with this a similar tautologus simile in As'vaghosa's *Buddha*.—

स्त्रीणां विरेजुर्मुखपङ्कजानि सक्तानि हृम्योऽप्यिव पङ्कजानि ॥ 3.19



and even in some of his other works is sensuous, the fact remains that Kālidāsa's conception of love was of a far nobler kind as seen from the following verse in one of his earlier works, the *Mālavikāgnimitra* :

अनातुरोऽल्पाङ्गितयोः प्रसिद्धयता समागमेनापि रतिर्न मां प्रति ।  
परस्परप्राप्तिनिराशयोर्वरं शरीरनाशोऽपि समानुरागयोः ॥

—3.15

(There is no charm for me in a union of lovers one of whom is anxious and the other indifferent. Far more welcome were death when the lovers cherish equal love but have no hope of union with each other.) Here is the poet full of youth and romance, who yet has come to conceive love as something more enduring and vital than passion. Love according to this conception is not merely physical; it is not just sensuous. It lies not in the eyes but in the heart and can be an instrument of elevating man. Although this fundamental conception of love as a noble spiritual emotion was arrived at early enough by the poet, yet it is possible that it continued to be developed, and its implications clearly understood, in the light of mature ideas and experience. Full of this conception of love, Kālidāsa started—from the wrong end, as it turned out. For, he made the description of Nature his main theme in *Rtu.* and man and love came in only as secondary. This approach pinned him down to the outward manifestation of love resulting from the influence of Nature and left him little scope for introducing his own higher conception. Secondly, the human element is treated in the abstract; there are no characters, no situations, no movement—only description in what might well appear fugitive stanzas. These two aspects appear to be mainly responsible for the inferiority of this poem to Kālidāsa's other works. The keen poetic insight of Kālidāsa was not slow to perceive this. In the rest of his poems and dramas he has brought his art and vision to bear upon this problem and, we have to admit, he has succeeded in solving it—even in the first part of the *Meghadūta* where the description of



Nature holds the field and which stood the greatest risk of sharing *Rtu.*'s fate. How he has done it we shall see in our study of the *Meghadūta*.

## (2) KUMĀRASAMBHAVA

Among the five most outstanding Mahākāvya in Sanskrit literature, Indian scholarship includes two compositions of Kālidāsa, viz., *Kumārasambhava* and *Raghuvamśa*. While Bhāravi, Māgha and Śrī Harṣa have each the honour of having one of their *Mahākāvya*s included in this ranking, Kālidāsa has the rare distinction of having two of his included therein. Although the *Raghuvamśa* is a later and therefore maturer work of Kālidāsa, yet the *Kumārasambhava* has not failed to appeal (probably its appeal is greater) even to non-Indian scholars by its poetic beauty, wealth of natural description, varying situations, and human interest. The poem is not preserved in a uniform length : in some Mss. it ends at the seventh canto. On the other hand, it is found to contain as many as seventeen cantos. That the eighth canto is every inch a Kālidāsan one is not disputed by anyone, though exception has been taken to the propriety of its contents both by modern scholars and ancient Indian critics on slightly different grounds. Ānandavardhana, the famous protagonist of the *Dhvani* school of poetry, finds fault with Kālidāsa for his having described the amorous pleasures of so venerable a pair as Śiva and Pārvatī. It was even commonly believed that Pārvatī became angry with Kālidāsa for the sacrilegious manner of describing her conjugal sports and cursed him ; consequently the poet could not proceed with his work further on. In any case Mallinātha has commented upon this poem only upto the end of the eighth canto. Modern criticism suggests that probably Kālidāsa did not proceed with the work on account of the fierce adverse criticism to which his eighth canto was subjected. Be that as it may, cantos 9-17 are inferior to the first eight "from every point of view." There are feeble repetitions, the texture of the story is not so well-knit, the classical propriety and dignified res-



traint which characterize the first eight cantos are lacking—in short, these cantos smack of the ordinary Purāṇa atmosphere and appear to have been composed by some one who thought that the poem which was called "*Birth of Kumāra*" was incomplete without the description of his birth and therefore also of his supreme exploit of killing the Tāraka demon, and so carried it on to seventeen cantos.

Indeed, the title of the poem is in itself a sufficient argument in favour of the opinion that it must end at the eighth canto. For, had it been the intention of the poet to carry on the narrative to the destruction of Tārakāsura, he would certainly have chosen a more adequate title. Moreover, it is argued in favour of the genuineness of the last nine cantos that in the second canto the destruction of Tārakāsura is demanded by gods and, as Brahmā points out, only Śiva's son can bring it about; the purpose which is thus referred to in the second canto must needs be fulfilled. This argument, however, is on a par with the way of thinking of those who feel that in the *Meghadūta*, Kālidāsa has forgotten to mention at the end whether after all the cloud went to Alakā and delivered the Yakṣa's message to his love-lorn beloved, and who have sought to supply this 'deficiency' by appending additional stanzas! The fact is that the second canto shows what dire necessity had arisen for the birth of a son from Mahādeva's loins to lead the armies of gods against the demon. In the first canto Pārvatī's father, Himālaya, is shown to be resolved upon giving his daughter to Śiva: in the second, the poet attempts to show that it was not merely to satisfy such individual or personal considerations that Śiva and Pārvatī should be united in wedlock; the union of this pair was an indispensable necessity for the deliverance of the world from the overmastering forces of Evil. This union brought about, the poet proceeds to describe the *amours* of Śiva and Pārvatī in the eighth canto, adding at the conclusion of the canto that Śiva passed five-and-twenty years in the company of his bride as



if they were a single night! How cleverly he has left the divine pair to their love-sports and in what an atmosphere of subtle suggestion of the birth of Kumāra he has concluded the canto! How well the title *Kumārasambhava*—in which *Sambhava* may also mean possibility or likelihood—points at the poem having ended at the eighth canto which along with the preceding seven preserves the unity of purpose of the poem! To those who would insist on their ‘pound of flesh’ from the poet, the retort is likely to be with a slight change in the words of the Parivrājikā in *Mālavikā*. अहो प्रबन्धाभ्यन्तराः प्राश्रिकाः !

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The poem opens with a description of the Himālaya mountain, which is conceived as a divine person, in all the grandeur and loveliness of Nature. The poet’s imagination is afire as he dwells on the description of this mountain “which is the source of inexhaustible treasures and whose beauty is not impaired by snow”: the mountain “which bears on its summits rich metallic ore, like untimely twilight, whose colours are distributed in patches of clouds and which supplies the decorative materials to the amorous celestial maidens”: the mountain where Vidyādhara damsels write amorous missives on birch-leaves with fluid ore, where the bamboo-groves whistle musically to the gusts of wind, where the ‘Oṣadhi’ (an herb) serves at night as lamps unfed with oil for the love-sports of the foresters in their caves, and where the sun opens the lotus-flowers in the lakes on its summits with *upturned* rays! Himālaya had Menā as his spouse who had borne him a son, Maināka, and a daughter, Pārvatī. In course of time Pārvatī grew to maiden-hood, and Kālidāsa has tried in eighteen stanzas to show how her matchless beauty of body and limb made her the *Belle Ideal*. The sage Nārada had predicted Pārvatī’s marriage with Śiva, the lord of the universe. But her father bided his time in making an approach to Śiva lest he should turn it down. In the meanwhile, Śiva had taken up his resi-



dence on one of the summits of the Himālaya and was engrossed in practising penances. Himālaya had permitted his daughter to wait upon and offer worship to this uncommon guest. (1)

About this time the gods, subjected to tortures by the demon Tāraka, approached Brahmā, lauded him with a panegyric and asked for a leader of their armies who would kill Tāraka. Brahmā, however, pleaded his inability to intervene, for Tāraka had been originally blessed by him and 'it is highly improper to cut down even a poison-tree after having reared it oneself;' he informed them, however, that only a son born of Mahādeva and Pārvatī could successfully march against the demon. To this purpose Indra, the ruler of heaven, turned his mind and bethought himself of Kāma, the god of love, who at once presented himself before his master. (2). Welcomed by his master with more than formal consideration, Kāma enquires about the purpose of his summons, volunteers to help Indra in amorous adventures and, being carried away by the mounting wave of arrogance, brags: "By your favour, though flowers only are my missiles, I would, assisted only by Spring, disturb the self-restraint even of Hara, the wielder of the *śināka* bow; what then are ordinary archers before me?" (10). Indra then unfolds his plan and asks Kāma to strive to get Śiva interested in the daughter of the mountain, who was then waiting upon the great Lord at her father's behest. Accompanied by Madhu (Spring) and Rati, his beloved, Kāma went to the Himālayan region; suddenly Spring set in—fifteen stanzas of Natural description teeming with erotic fervour show how the god of love had a proper setting for his game. Although Mahādeva heard the enchanting music of the heavenly nymphs, he yet continued his meditation: the entire precincts of his hermitage were as silent and unruffled as if drawn in a picture! Kāma stole into the sanctuary which was shaded by overhanging branches of Nameru trees—and saw Mahādeva, the great Yogin, lost in deep meditation, full of transcendental



calm and serenity and radiating the lustre of majesty which was forbidding. On seeing him Kāma's heart sank—but just then Pārvatī arrived there “stirring up the fire of Kāma's courage, which was almost extinguished, by the exquisite charms of her body,” clad in a garment ‘red like the morning sun’ and decorated with seasonal flowers. Mahādeva, too, finished his meditation about that time. Pārvatī approached him for worship: and as she was in the act of offering a rosary of the seeds of celestial lotus-flowers to Mahādeva, Kāma aimed his never-failing arrow *Sammohana* at him. Mahādeva felt disturbed—and “cast his eyes on Umā's face with its *Bimba*-like lower-lip.” He soon gathered himself up and, on looking around for the cause of such a feeling in his heart, “saw the mind-born one (Kāma), his clenched fist resting at the corner of the right eye, his shoulders bent forward, left leg drawn in, his beautiful bow stretched to a circle, and ready to strike.” “Suddenly the fire from the third eye of the enraged God darted out and Kāma was burnt to ashes. (3). Rati, Kāma's beloved, who had fallen into a swoon at this sudden calamity, regained consciousness and bewailed her loss in pathetic and touching strains and decided to immolate herself on the pyre of her dead husband. An ethereal voice, however, dissuaded her from carrying out her resolve as she was destined to be reunited with Kāma who would regain his body when Mahādeva married Pārvatī. (4).

Her hopes dashed and dreams shattered, Pārvatī deprecated her own beauty which had failed to attract the person she loved; and she resolved to encompass by suffering and penance what she could not gain by bodily charm. Retiring to the summit which since then has borne her name, she began austerities the most exacting, the most rigorous: in summer she sat in the midst of four blazing fires and gazed at the sun; in the rainy season she remained at night in the open, exposed to lashing rains accompanied by thunder and lightning; during winter nights she stayed in water with freezing winds



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blowing. She gave up even the use of leaves for maintenance and became an object of homage even for seasoned ascetics.

Once there came a young Celibate (*Brahmacāri*) to her hermitage. Formal courtesies over, he confesses to a curiosity as to why this daughter of Himālaya "having cast ornaments aside, has put on in her youth the bark-garment suitable for old age." The friend of Pārvatī informs him how Pārvatī who had set her heart on Mahādeva had no other alternative but practising penances for winning the heart of the Great God. Whereupon the *Brahmacāri*, claiming to be a friend of Pārvatī, tries to dissuade her by showing how Mahādeva was hardly a bridgroom worth looking for—he wears serpents on his hands, covers himself with an elephant skin dripping with blood, resides in the burning ground and rides on an over-age bull; "His body is deformed in eyes, his (family of) birth is not known and his means are only too well indicated by his nakedness. Tell me, O fawn-eyed one, are those qualities which are generally sought in bridegrooms to be found—even a single one of them—in that three-eyed Śiva?" All this light-hearted lampoon of Śiva was more than Pārvatī could bear; she gave very spirited and crushing replies to the celibate and thus revealed the depth of her love for Mahādeva. Seeing that the "boy" was about to speak further, she tries to leave the place in a huff—when the *Brahmacāri* reveals his real self as Śiva and says "From today I am thy slave bought with penances, O beautiful-limbed one." (5). Pārvatī, however, conveyed her wish to him through her friend that her father should be formally requested to celebrate their union. Śiva then remembered the seven celestial sages who immediately came to him along with Arundhatī. Śiva disclosed to them his desire for Pārvatī's hand and asked them to make a formal proposal to her father in his behalf. The sages then go to Oṣadhiprastha, the capital of Himālaya who receives them with great courtesy, and inform him that the great Lord was seeking his daughter's hand in marriage and advise him



to consent to this union. With the consent of his wife, Himālaya agreed to the proposal, and the celebration of the marriage was fixed to take place three days later. (6). Then Himālaya's capital was all agog for the event. The preparations for the occasion, the ceremonial rites performed over the bride, her bridal decoration, etc., on the one hand and similar decorations for the bridegroom on the other, the procession, the rush of ladies to the windows in order to have a look at the bridegroom, the bridal reception, the formal marriage ceremony ending with greetings for the newly-married couple—all this forms the contents of the next canto. (7). The eighth canto contains a "frank" description, in accordance with the canons of the Kāmaśāstra, of the conjugal sports of Śiva and Pārvatī which went on for a hundred and fifty seasons (8). Then Agni assuming the form of a pigeon approached Mahādeva and reminded him of the distress of the gods, whereupon Mahādeva cast his seed in him. (9). But, unable to bear the lustre and heat of his charge, Agni threw it into the celestial Ganges who, in her turn, handed it over to the six Kṛttikās (Pleiades) that had come there for a bath; and the latter cast it into a thicket of reeds where it developed into a child with six faces. (10). Śiva and Pārvatī take the child home where this wonderful baby acquired the knowledge of sciences and weapons and also attained to youth when it was six days old! (11). At the request of Indra and other gods, Śiva asked his son to lead the divine armies against Tāraka. (12). Kumāra goes to heaven in the company of the gods and is formally appointed Commander of the Celestial armies (13) which then march against the demon. (14). Tāraka, nothing daunted by the evil omens that occurred, sets out to meet his enemies. (15). A battle ensues (16) and Tāraka is killed (17).

In this poem which was Kālidāsa's next composition in verse after *Rtū*, his poetic power is seen burgeoning all round. The story of the union of Śiva and Pārvatī is told in eight cantos by means of situations and episodes interspersed with



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fine descriptions and by means of able characterization. There is a wealth of description of Nature which is brought into a closer relation with the characters of the story and which therefore reveals a deeper understanding on the part of the poet of the relation between man and Nature. The descriptions of Pārvatī, Śiva, etc., show that Kālidāsa was equally at home in the art of describing "man." While the first two cantos are mainly descriptive, the third is full of "story" interest. Indra's welcome to Kāma, the latter's boastful words, his departure for the Himālayan forest, the advent of Spring, Śiva's meditation, Pāravti's arrival, Kāma's taking of the aim at Mahādeva, the latter's "strange feelings," his wrath, Kāma's burning to ashes—this rich succession of situations makes this canto as interesting for its story element as it is for its brilliant poetic fancy. The fifth canto describes Pārvatī's penances and the episode of the *Brahmacāri*. The arrival of the seven sages at Himālaya's residence for the purpose of asking his daughter in marriage for Śiva, the formalities observed there and the description of the marriage ceremony are interesting as a poetic exemplification of the rules of Dharmaśāstra.

Throughout the eight cantos of the poem the human interest is predominant. Although all the characters are divine—Śiva, Pārvatī, Kāma, Rati, Himālaya, etc., yet the poet has endowed them with human feelings and emotions. The main characters are drawn with a deft hand so that despite the difference in the degree of their portrayal they yet stand out vivid and well-defined. Menā the devoted housewife and affectionate mother, and Rati whose very "life depended upon Kāma" facing the misfortune of losing him are only secondary characters, though a whole canto is devoted to the pathetic lamentation of Rati over her bereavement. Himālaya is portrayed as a father having a daughter to be given in marriage, yet dignified enough not to risk a rebuff from an intended son-in-law even of Śiva's standing. His nobility of mind and



humility are revealed when he received the seven sages. Kāma shares a servant's elation when the master shows a little consideration. In his boastfulness he brags about "breaking down even Hara's self-control." His tenacity of purpose is shown by his "desire to achieve success even at the cost of his body." Pārvatī's childhood and attainment of youth, though described in detail, serve only as a background. Pārvatī, the beautiful maiden of blooming youth, bashful, ashamed of her own beauty because of its failure to arrest the attention of Mahādeva yet resolute and ready to brave any hardships for gaining her end in view, courteous to strangers but unwilling to listen to any uncomplimentary remarks about Mahādeva; Pārvatī, the blushing maiden who wishes her marriage to Śiva to be solemnized by her father and who at the time of her nuptial decoration "struck her friend with a garland when the latter having finished the application of the dye to her feet said in jest 'Kick the crescent-moon on the head of thy husband with this' (leg)"—this Pārvatī in the *Kumārsambhava* is out and out human. Mahādeva, on the other hand, retains all the divine majesty of the Lord of the universe Who is beyond all passion; but this trait is tempered by human feelings just sufficient for the purposes of the poem. The cleverness and insight with which Kālidāsa has drawn the character of Mahādeva and has succeeded in meeting the demands both of his religious sentiment and poetic art are at once a triumph of his genius.

The charm of the *Kumār*, lies to no small extent in the judicious use of light and shade-alternation of situations grave and gay. The first canto with its brilliant descriptions of Nature and maidenly youth is followed by the story of the distress of gods in the second. In the third, Kāma's boastful speech is followed by Indra's serious address; the riotous description of spring is immediately succeeded by the description of the utter calm in Śiva's hermitage; Mahādeva's impenetrable calm and serenity are contrasted with the maddening youth



of Pārvatī. The pathos of the fourth canto comes like a relief after the high tension of the events of the preceding one. In the fifth the austereness of the description of Pārvatī's penances is relieved by the lighter episode of the *Brahmacāri* that follows it.

Kālidāsa has made occasional use of irony. His humour is seen in different situations but especially in the banter, satire and ridicule in which the *Brahmacāri* indulges against Śiva. His satiric vein is clearly visible in the line :

प्रयोजनापेक्षितया प्रभूणां प्रायश्चलं गौरवमाश्रितेषु । —3.1

(The regard of masters for their servants varies in accordance with the purpose to be served.) Language flows easily—suitable and adequate for the matter in hand. Contrast Mahādeva's description in the third canto with Rati-vilāpa in the fourth. He sometimes uses literary devices like alliteration and *Yamakas*, and makes sound echo the sense. cf. :

खे खेलगामी तमुवाह ब्राह्मः सशङ्खचामीकरकिङ्किणीकः ।

तटाभिवातादिव लग्नपङ्के धुन्वन्मुहुः प्रोतघने विषाणे ॥ —7.49

How by means of a single significant word he can light up an aspect or attitude of a character in a situation can be seen from the significance of *साशङ्कम्* in the following verse :

स माधवेनाभिमेतेन सख्या रत्या च साशङ्कमनुप्रयातः ।

अङ्गव्ययप्रार्थितकार्यसिद्धिः स्थाण्वाश्रमं हेमवतं जगाम ॥ —3.23

(Followed by his dear friend Mādhava and by Rati *full of misgivings*, he (Kāma) went to Śiva's hermitage in Himālaya, bent upon achieving his end even at the cost of his life.) His power of suggestion can be seen in verses like 3.68 or 6.84. Some of his word-pictures would strain the resources of an artist's genius if they were to be transferred to the canvass, e.g., 2.64, 3.70, etc. Here is perhaps the best of them :

तं वीक्ष्य वेपथुमती सरसाङ्गयटि-

निक्षेपणाय पद्मुद्धतमुद्वहन्ती ।

मार्गाचलव्यतिकराकुलितेव सिन्धुः

शैलाधिराजतनया न ययौ न तस्थौ ॥ —5.85



(On seeing him, the daughter of the lord of mountains, i.e., Pārvatī, full of trembling, her slim body covered with perspiration, keeping aloft her foot which was raised for taking a step, neither went nor stayed like a river obstructed by the presence of a mountain in its course.)

The poem bristles with the figure *Arthāntaranyāsa*. Most of these 'corroborations' are drawn from life and, in their variety and number, show the poet's depth of understanding of human nature. Cf. 1.59, 3.1, 4.26, 5.5, 7.83, etc. Beautiful similes like 3.54, 4.39, 7.11, 7.53, etc., and fancies (3.25, etc.) go far in endowing the poem with the charm that it exercises on its readers.

Before concluding this appreciation we shall take note of one or two points raised by critics against this poem. Writers on Poetics like Mammāṭa and Viśvanātha have found fault with the poem for the repetition (पुनर्दीप्ति) of *pathos* in the lamentation of Rati after the appearance of Madhu in the fourth canto. Taking into consideration the absolute naturalness of the situation, modern criticism is not likely to uphold this view. Another point is made about the impropriety of the word भव in तावत्स वह्निर्भवेनैव जन्मा भस्मावशेषं मदनं चकार। (3.72), for the context would demand the word हर in place of भव. However, the poet who has displayed his subtle sense of propriety in the use of the word हर in हरस्तु किञ्चित्परिलुप्त धैर्यः। etc. (3.67) can well be depended upon for the propriety of भव in the present case. Probably, he intends thereby to suggest that Kāma was burnt not once for all but only to rise again in the fulness of time; that is why he has used the apparently unsuitable भव instead of हर. These are after all minor points in a poem in which, as Ryder has truly observed, "there are passages of a piercing beauty which the world can never let die."

The story of the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī is an ancient and popular one and is found in various Purāṇas like



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Śiva-Purāṇa, Skanda-Purāṇa, Brahma-Purāṇa, etc. This raises the question of Kālidāsa's indebtedness to the sources on which he might have drawn. On a consideration of this question Winternitz opined that Kālidāsa was indebted to the *Skanda-Purāṇa*. On the other hand the *Śiva-Purāṇa* version is closely similar to the theme and language of the *Kumārasambhava* : c. g. compare :

स्त्रीस्वभावत्तदा सा च लज्जिता सुन्दरी स्वयम् ।  
विवृण्वती तथाङ्गानि पश्यन्ती च मुहुर्मुहुः ॥ —*Śiva P.*

and

विवृण्वती शैलसुतापि भावमङ्गैः स्फुरद्बालकदम्बकल्पैः ।  
साचीकृता चारुतेरेण तस्थौ मुखेन पर्यस्तत्रिलोचनेन ॥ —*Kumār. 3.68*

Also compare

स्थलेतत्तथा हित्वा यास्यामोऽन्यत्र मा चिरम् ।  
इत्युक्त्वा चलनायासौ पदमुत्क्षिपते यदा ॥  
तदासौ च शिवः साक्षादलम्बे प्रियां सतीम् ।  
कृत्वा स्वीयं स्वरूपं च.....॥ —*Śiva P.*

and

इतो गमिष्याम्यथवेति वादिनी चचाल बाला स्तनभिन्नवत्कला ।  
स्वरूपमास्थाय च तां कृतस्मितः समालम्बे वृषराजकेतनः ॥  
—*Kumār. 5.84.*

The Purāṇas as they now exist have undergone various reactions, and in many cases are comparatively modern compilations. It is therefore impossible to hold that Kālidāsa has drawn upon, say, the *Śiva Purāṇa*'s extant version. Rather the position is likely to be the other way about. From the very close resemblance of matter and language and the indiscriminate use of Kālidāsa's phrases (cf. विवृण्वती in the above case) it is apparent that the compiler of the *Śiva Purāṇa* is indebted to Kālidāsa, and not vice versa.



## (3) MEGHADŪTA

The poetic soul which had been revelling in singing of love in the *Rtusamhāra*, in the *Mālavikāgnimitra* and in the *Kumārasambhava* continued to dwell on the same sentiment and produced a pearl of lyrical poetry—*Meghadūta*, a small poem, divided into two parts and consisting of a hundred and odd stanzas. Kālidāsa's fame as *primus inter omnes* in the realm of poetry rests no less upon this small poem of his than upon his extensive works like the *Śākuntala* and the *Raghuvamśa*. How widely known the poem had become in early times and how it had caught popular imagination can be seen from the fact that Jināsena, a Jain author who flourished in the eighth century A.D., composed his poem *Pārśvābhijudaya* in which, by means of *Samasyāpūrāṇa*, he utilized one or more lines of the successive stanzas of the *Meghadūta* in building up his own verses and thus described the life of *Pārśvanātha*, a Jain saint. Indeed, the *Meghadūta* is remarkable as much for its form as for its contents; for it originated a distinct genre of literary composition which was till then non-existent. From the twelfth century onward when Dhoyī wrote his *Pavanadūta* modelling it after Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta*, there has followed a succession of imitations in later times. This is evidence enough of the recognition which the poem secured in early times, and modern scholarship has upheld this appreciation by showering unstinted praises upon it.

The very popularity which a literary composition enjoys leads often to its corruption at the hands of enthusiastic *connoisseurs* who would like to 'improve' the original by adding something of their own. The *Meghadūta* has obviously suffered in this manner, for its text is not available to us in a fixed definite number of verses. Jināsena, the Jain author referred to above, knew the text of the poem as consisting of 120 verses. Among the commentators of this poem, Vallabha-deva's text had 111 or, as contended by Prof. K. B. Pathak, 120 verses, Sthiradeva's had 112, Dakṣiṇāvartanātha's had



110 and Mallinātha, the latest and best known of them all, had a text of 121 stanzas including five which he declared to be spurious. Although, therefore, the exact extent of the text has been fluctuating and although every stanza has an importance of its own, yet the poem as a whole is not affected at all by these variations, except in the case of the additional concluding stanzas which we shall presently consider.

The question, where did Kālidāsa get the inspiration to compose this poem? has been raised as far back as Mallinātha's time, for the latter in his commentary on the first verse of the poem refers to a popular view that the poet composed the *Meghadūta*, keeping before his mind the message of Rāma conveyed by Hanūmān to Sītā. cf. सीतां प्रति रामस्य हनूमत्संदेशं मनसि निधाय मेघसंदेशं कविः कृतवानित्याहुः। This is quite probable. Kālidāsa's close acquaintance with Vālmīki's epic is manifest in the story of Rāma in *Raghu*. 10-15. In the *Meghadūta* he refers to Rāma and Sītā in the opening verse in feeling and respectful terms. There are some points of similarity in the Yakṣa's message and Rāma's message in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. More definite is the evidence of vs. 105 in which the Yakṣa says to the cloud, "Thus addressed, she (my beloved), with face upturned and heart full of longing, having seen and welcomed you as Sītā did Hanūmān, will listen attentively to what follows. For, O gentle friend, to women the news about their beloved husbands brought by their friends is little short of union." Therefore, the episode of Rāma's message to Sītā in the *Rāmāyaṇa* is quite likely to have supplied to the poet the *motiff* for his poem. But Kālidāsa's debt to Vālmīki in this matter is just this much and no more. He owes the idea to the author of the *Rāmāyaṇa* but not its execution. For, the *Meghadūta*, as we have it, is a product of the poet's own creative genius.

Let us see how the poet's high artistic sense worked the idea out. After having decided to treat of love in separation and having chosen for this purpose the idea of the lover send-



ing a message to cheer up his beloved pining in separation, the poet could have proceeded along the lines of Rāma's message in the *Rāmāyaṇa*: the Yakṣa might request the cloud to go to Kubera's Capital, Alakā, and deliver his message of hope to his beloved. The cloud might accede to this request of the Yakṣa and deliver the message to his spouse. This would not have been a bad lay-out: the various descriptions—of the cloud's *route*, of Alakā, of the tender Yakṣiṇī—would have been retained, and the message would have been actually delivered. Yet this plan would certainly not have the Kālidāsan touch. It would have been of the ordinary, if not a little prosaic, too. The plot—the story—would have been predominant as against the sentiment which would have been thrown into the back-ground. This plan would not have been able to describe, apart from the actual contents of the message, the depth of love of the languishing Yakṣa. Perhaps, the cloud might have described the Yakṣa's love-lorn condition to his beloved; but such description even at its best could not have revealed the agony of the lover's heart. Above all, the various links in the chain of the plot would have remained rather loosely connected with each other, and the unity of the poem would have suffered. But the poet's eye which set the episode of star-crossed lovers in the romantic background of Alakā and its semi-divine inhabitants, which chose the cloud as the bearer of the lover's message, which dispensed with the token of recognition (Hanūmān carries Rāma's ring to Sītā)—the same poetic eye saw the plan and changed it—dramatized it with a master-stroke of genius. Save for the introductory verses which provide the necessary back-ground, the *Meghadūta* is one long address of the Yakṣa to the cloud right upto the end. The poet's design of the poem has made the Yakṣa himself to show the *route* to Alakā which the cloud should follow, to give a description of his beloved, to recite the contents of the message before the cloud and request it to deliver the same to his "second heart" in Alakā.



What a design ! Being a sustained address of the Yakṣa to the cloud, the poem acquired a dramatic frame. Every stanza, nay, every word, that it contains, comes from the mouth of the lover-in-separation, and therefore assumes significance as expressing his thoughts and emotions. All the different stages and descriptions in the poem, whatever their differences, have been spanned, as it were, by the personality of the Yakṣa and they serve to reveal his yearning, hope, despondency, joy, sorrow—the various moods of his anguished heart. Indeed, the *Meghadūta*, as Kālidāsa has conceived it, is one deep sigh of a love-stricken heart doomed to separation—its beats being heard from stanza to stanza. Descriptions of scenes of Nature—mountains, rivers, cities, villages, country-side—which would at best have been adornments in the poem are now suffused with the longing of the lover's heart and become invested with a deeper meaning. The tenderness and pathos of the description of the heroine become doubly justified as they spring from the wistful anguish of her lover's heart. What poignant anguish the Yakṣa must have suffered as he conjured up the figure of his beloved, love-sick, "alone like a *Cakravāka* bird when her mate is away" ! The originality of Kālidāsa's design has rescued this description from being merely a description and turned it into an expression of the lover's anguish. The message itself is short and extends over a dozen stanzas. But whatever it has to say is already eloquently said—for the reader—by the preceding portion of the poem. The Yakṣa says to his beloved :

संक्षिप्येत क्षण इव कथं दीर्घयामा त्रियामा

सर्वावस्थास्वहरपि कथं मन्दमन्दातपं स्यात् ।

इत्थं चेतश्चटुलनयने दुर्लभप्रार्थनं मे

गाढोष्माभिः कृतमशरणं त्वद्वियोगव्यथाभिः ॥ —112.

(How could the night with its protracted watches be shortened into a moment ? How could the day, too, be made bearable of sunshine at all times ?—Entertaining such desires difficult



of fulfilment, my heart is rendered helpless, O tremulous-eyed one, by the distressing pangs of thy separation.) This mood, this wistfulness of love, breathes throughout the poem, the descriptions and situations standing transfigured as the symbols of its expression. Thus the poem acquires a unity and a depth of lyrical tone which would, given the same circumstances, be hardly attainable in any other manner.

But, could a cloud act as a messenger? Bhāmaha, the rhetorician, felt the impropriety of "speech-less or inarticulate" objects being conceived as messengers and dubbed such a conception as 'absurd' (अयुक्तिम्). He, however, qualified his opposition—apparently as a concession to Kālidāsa's own explanation of the matter—by adding :

यदि चोल्कण्डया यत्तदुन्मत्त इव भाषते ।

तथा भवतु भूमेर्देव सुमेधोभिः प्रयुज्यते ॥

—*Kāvyālamkāra* 1.44

(If, however, the hero speaks like a maniac through great anxiousness, let it be. This (device) is often used by the wise.) Kālidāsa knew full well what he was doing and was not unaware of the possibility of such criticism. In anticipation, he has sought to answer it in stanza 5 :

धूमज्योतिःसलिलमस्तां संनिपातः क्व मेघः

संदेशार्थाः क्व पटुकरणैः प्राणिभिः प्रापणीयाः ।

इत्योत्सुक्यादपरिगणयन्गुह्यकस्तं यथाचे

कामार्ता हि प्रकृतिकृपणाश्चेतनाचेतनेषु ॥

(Where, on the one hand, a cloud which is but a conglomeration of vapour, light water and wind, and where, on the other, messages which can be carried by animate beings with competent senses?—Not taking this into consideration by reason of his yearning, the Yakṣa made a request to it (the cloud). Indeed, those stricken with love become naturally indiscriminate between objects animate and inanimate). His explanation is rooted in experience : love-lorn persons be-



come blinded by their own 'fancy' and run at a tangent to the ways of the world. Objects, whether animate or inanimate, are all treated by them alike. This view is the same as Shakespeare's who bracketed the lover and the lunatic together as having

"Such seething brains,  
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend  
more than cool reason ever comprehends."

Kālidāsa, like Shakespeare, would hardly have objected to the inclusion of the poet in this company which is "of imagination all compact." For, who else but a poet, apart from the other two, could think of sending a message through a cloud? In fact, the poet in Kālidāsa had a deeper understanding of the scope of poetry than the learned rhetorician who chose to take exception to the conception of a cloud as a messenger. The poet's art, as Mammaṭa has truly observed, "transcends the laws ordained by Nature" (नियतिकृतनियमरहिता). Its loyalty is not to the physical but to a super-physical truth. That the *Meghadūta* has been loyal to this higher, fundamental truth is clearly proved by the fact that generations of appreciative readers down these many centuries have overlooked—indeed, have not cared to be conscious of—this 'absurdity' and enjoyed the poem as best they might. In point of fact, Kālidāsa, having given this explanation, has taken the greatest care not to do violence to normal natural experience: throughout the poem he has made the cloud remain a passive listener to the out-pourings of the Yakṣa's heart. We shall now realize what atrocious violence is done to the poet's art by those overzealous *connoisseurs* who think that the poem is incomplete unless the message is actually delivered by the cloud to the Yakṣa's beloved and therefore seek to complete it by adding a few stanzas at the end. Kālidāsa could never be guilty of such an unartistic ending.



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Let us now turn to the theme of the poem: A Yakṣa (a semi-divine being) who for remissness in duty was banished by his master from his capital for a period of twelve months took up his residence on the Rāmāgiri mountain (in Central India). On the first day of the month of Āṣāḍha he saw a large black cloud looming over the peak of the mountain "like an elephant butting against an earthen mound;" and his amorous feelings were excited, for, "at the sight of clouds, the heart of even those who are happy (united with their beloveds) becomes agitated; what to say, then when the beloved person longing to lock the arms round one's neck is far away?" (3). He decides to send a message to his love-lorn beloved who would be "alive, anxiously counting the days," for:

आशाबन्धः कुसुमसदृशं प्रायशो सङ्गनानां

सद्यःपाति प्रणयि हृदयं विप्रयोगे रुणद्धि ॥ —9

(The stem of hope, indeed, sustains, during separation, the hearts of lovable women, full of love, (tender) like flowers and liable to crash any moment). So he welcomes the cloud with Kuṭaja flowers and addresses it as follows:—You'll please carry a message from me to my beloved in Alakā, "the city of lordly Yakṣas, where the palatial mansions are bathed in moon-light emanating from the head of Śiva residing in the outer garden." The omens are auspicious and you may start northwards. "Being drunk by the eyes of women in the country-side beaming with delight but unversed in the movements of the eyebrows," you will cross Māla and reach the mountain Āmrakūṭa beyond which, a little further away, you will see "Revā (Narmadā) shattering its waters (into different currents) at the foot of the Vindhya Mountain rugged with rocks, like the decoration with ornamental designs on the body of an elephant" (19). You will then proceed to the Daśārṇa country which "at your advent, will have the garden-hedges white with the opening Ketakas, the sacred trees a-buzz with the building of nests by crows and other birds, the



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regions of Jambū-groves darkened by the ripened fruits, and the swans likely to stay a few days more" (23). Having there enjoyed, like a lover, 'the sweet undulating water of the river Vetravatī as if it were the sweet mouth of the beloved with eye-brows knitting', you will move on to the mountain Nicaïs and rest there awhile. Next,

वक्रः पन्था यदि भवतः प्रस्थितस्योत्तराशं  
 सीधोत्सङ्गप्रणयविमुखो मा स्म भूरुज्जयिन्याः ।  
 विद्युद्दामस्फुरितचक्रितैस्तत्र पौराङ्गनानां  
 लोलापाङ्गैर्यदि न रमसे लोचनैर्वञ्जितोऽसि ॥ —27

[Even though the *route* may be a *detour* to you proceeding northwards, let you not be averse to the acquaintance of the terraces of mansions in Ujjayinī. If you do not feel beguiled there by the eyes of the city's charming women, shying at the flashes of streaks of lightning and tremulous at the outer corners—then cheated indeed you are (of a worthwhile experience)]. Cross the river Nirvindhyā and soon you'll enter the Avanti country : proceed to its capital Viśālā (Ujjayinī) "full of abundant riches" and "on seeing whose crores of bright necklaces with large pearls as centre-pieces, conches, oyster-shells, emeralds green like grass and shooting rays upwards, and pieces of corals arranged in the shops, the oceans appear to have only water left behind in them." (33). Nearby is the temple of Mahākālā which you must visit at the time of evening worship when "dancing girls, their girdles tinkling at the planting of their feet and hands fatigued by the graceful waving of chowries with handles enveloped in the lustre of pearls, will, having received from you the first drops of rain agreeable to the nail-wounds, cast glances long like rows of bees at you." (37). From there, beyond the river Gambhīrā, you will go to Devagiri 'the usual residence of Skanda'; and having crossed the river Carmanvatī and passing by Daśapura, the plain of Kurukṣetra, and the river Sarasvatī, "you will proceed to the daughter of Jahnu (Ganges) which flows from the Himālaya



in the vicinity of Kanakhala, which “served as the flight of steps to heaven for the sons of Sagara, and which, smiling as it were by her foams at the frowning face of Pārvatī, seized the hair of Śiva with her hands in the form of waves contacting the moon.” (52). Thence to the mountain “white with snow”, resting on whose peak for relieving your fatigue you will attain to “beauty comparable to the mud dug up by the white bull of Śiva.” Then, travelling through the Kraunca-pass,

गत्वा चोर्व्वं दशमुखभुजोच्छ्रासितप्रस्थसन्धेः

कैलासस्य त्रिदशवनितादर्पणस्यातिथिः स्याः ।

शृङ्गोच्छ्रायेः कुमुदविशदयो विवृत्य स्थितः खं

राशीभूतः प्रतिदिनमिव त्र्यम्बकस्याद्वाहसः ॥ —60

(And having proceeded northward, you should become the guest of Kailāsa—the looking-glass of the heavenly maidens—the joints of whose peaks were distended by the arms of Rāvaṇa and which stands occupying the sky with its lofty peaks white like moon-lotuses, as if it were the roaring laughter of Mahādeva piled up from day to day!). You will enjoy the water of the Mānasa lake with its golden lotuses there; and you are sure to recognize Alakā with its palatial mansions, “when you see it, with its silken garment in the form of the Ganges dropped down, nestling on its peak as if on a lover’s lap” (65)—Alakā “where trees are eternally in blossom and therefore resounding with the hum of intoxicated bees, where lotus-ponds are ever full of lotuses and therefore possess girdles formed by the rows of swans, where the domestic peacocks with ever-shining plumage have upturned necks for giving out their shouts and where the evenings with eternal moon-light are delightful owing to darkness having been dispelled :

यत्रोन्मत्तभ्रमरमुखराः पादपा नित्यपुष्पा

हंसश्रेणीरचितरशना नित्यपद्मा नलिन्यः ।

कैकोल्कण्ठा भवनशिखिनो नित्यभास्वल्कलापा

नित्यज्योत्स्नाः प्रतिहततमोवृत्तिरम्याः प्रदोषाः ॥ —70



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—“Where, served by breezes cool on account of (their blowing over) the water of the Mandākinī (the celestial Ganges) and sheltered from heat by the shade of Mandāra trees growing along its banks, the young maidens—coveted by the gods play with gems which are concealed by thrusting the fist into the golden sands and are to be sought out :

मन्दाकिन्याः सलिलशिशिः सेव्यमाना मरुद्भिः—  
मन्दाराणामनुतटरुहां छायाया वारितोष्णाः ।  
अन्वेष्टव्यैः कनकसिक्तामुष्टिनिक्षेपगृहैः  
संस्त्रीडन्ते मणिभिरमराप्रार्थिता यत्र कन्याः ॥ —75

—“Where, knowing that God Śiva resides there in person, the God of Love, through fear, does not usually carry his bow with the bees as its string. His purpose is achieved solely by the graceful movements of artful maidens casting glances, which are accompanied by the knitting of eye-brows and are never futile, at their targets—the lovers” :

मत्वा देवं धनपतिसखं यत्रसाक्षाद्भवन्तं  
प्रायश्चापं न वहति भयान्मन्मथः षट्पदज्यम् ।  
सभ्रभङ्गप्रहितनयनैः कामिलक्ष्येष्वमोघै-  
स्तस्यारम्भश्चतुरवनिताविभ्रमैरेव सिद्धः ॥ —79

There you will see my home—with the archway beautiful like the rainbow, and the young Mandāra tree—tended by my beloved—bent with the bunches of flowers within reach of hands, and the water-tank with its flight of steps paved with emerald-stones and crowded with full-blown golden lotus-flowers with glossy stalks of *lapis lazuli*, and the pleasure-mountain with its summit studded with sapphires. That's my home—“now, in my absence, wearing a cheerless appearance ; for the lotus-flower does not retain its beauty when the sun has disappeared.” Inside, you'll see a lady ‘in the bloom of youth, slender, with eyes like those of a startled doe, slothful of movement on account of the weight of posteriors and weighted down a little with her breasts’.

तां जानीयाः परिमितक्रथां जीवितं मे द्वितीयं  
 दूरीभूते मयि सहचरे चक्रवाकीमिवैकाम् ।  
 गाढोल्कां गुरुषु दिवसेष्वेषु गच्छत्सु बालां  
 जातां मन्ये शिशिरमथितां पद्मिनीं वान्यरूपाम् ॥ —84

(Know her—sparing of speech—to be my second life, 'lonely like a female *Cakravāka*, because I, her companion, am away. I fear the poor lady full of longing during these wearisome days must have changed (suffered) like a lotus-plant blighted by frost). You will find her "engaged in making offerings or drawing my likeness emaciated through separation and conceived in imagination, or asking in sweet tones the *mainā* in the cage, 'Dost thou remember thy master, O sweet bird? Thou wast indeed his favourite', or "having placed the lyre on her lap covered with the dirty garments, desirous to sing aloud a song whose words are arranged so as to contain my name in it, but after playing with great difficulty on the strings wet with her tears, forgetting again and again the *mūrccchanā* (harmonious intonation) started by her own self," or "counting the remaining months of separation by placing as many flowers on the threshold".

Having introduced yourself as 'the friend of thy husband,' you will convey this my message to her :

इयमास्वङ्गं चकितहरिणीप्रेक्षणे दृष्टिपातं  
 वक्त्रच्छायां शशिनि शिखिनां बर्हभोरषु केशान् ।  
 उत्पद्यामि प्रतनुषु नदीवीचिषु भ्रविलासा-  
 न्हन्तैकस्मिन्कचिदपि न ते चण्डिं सादृश्यमस्ति ॥ —109

(I am fancying thy (slender) body in *Priyangu* creepers, thy glances in the gaze of startled does, the beauty of thy face in the moon, thy locks of hair in the heavy plumage of peacocks, thy graceful movements of eye-brows in the ripples of the rivers—but, alas, in not one of them, O irate lady, is there any comparison with thee). "I am managing to live on by myself, [treating myself to various dreams. Thou, too, O good lady,



shouldst therefore not give way to helplessness. To whom does unmixed happiness come—or misery alone (overtake)? Fortune turns up and down like the felly of a wheel ” :

नन्वात्मानं बहु विगणयन्नात्मनैवावलम्बे  
तत्कल्याणि त्वमपि नितरां मा गमः कातरत्वम् ।  
कस्यात्यन्तं सुखमुपनतं दुःखमेकान्ततो वा  
नीचैर्गच्छत्युपरि च दशा चक्रनेभिक्रमेण ॥ —114

My curse will end in four months' time—“and then we two shall gratify our various longings, multiplied by separation, during nights lit up with the rich autumnal moonlight.”

Having done me this favour, O cloud, either through friendship or compassion on me, distressed as I am, you may proceed to wherever you like—may you, however, not thus (like me) suffer separation from lightning even for a moment !

मा भूदेवं क्षणपि च ते विद्युता विप्रयोगः । —120

Then follow four or five spurious stanzas which say that the cloud went to Alakā as requested, spotted the Yakṣa's residence and in celestial speech recited the message to his beloved. The lord of Alakā, coming to know about this message, took pity upon the couple and reunited them.

This summary in English, although it is given in detail and mostly in literal translation, fails to do justice to the beauty of the original, where the harmony of sound is half its poetry. No translation can succeed in reproducing the euphony of intonation, the lilt, the delicate music of the original Sanskrit which make the stanzas haunt the ear. It is impossible to transplant, for instance, the soft sombre harmony of :

क्षामच्छायं भवनमधुना मह्वियोगेन नूतम् ।

(My home will now, no doubt, be wearing a cheerless appearance in my absence) or the swell of

तस्माद्गच्छेरनुकनखलं शैलराजावतीर्णां  
जह्नोः कन्यां सगरतनयस्वर्गसोपानपङ्क्तिम् ॥ —52

( For translation see *ante* )



Sound and sense have been wedded together. And yet there is no deliberate striving after effect by means of devices like alliteration which by their artificiality would impair the freshness and beauty of the poem. The poet's delicate ear for music and mastery over language have succeeded in producing harmony of sound matching the delicacy of sense. While using single words or compounds, big and small—some of them even extending over a whole *pada*—as they suit his purpose, the poet has uniformly employed the *Mandākrāntā* metre which, by virtue of its slow, long-drawn-out rhythm, is eminently suitable for the pathos and tenderness of love in separation.

The description of the Yakṣa's abode and that of his beloved languishing in separation are done with an insight and feeling which cannot but excite tender sympathy in our hearts. Indeed, the moving pathos and tenderness of these descriptions have a naturalness in them which has led to the surmise whether *Megh.* does not describe the poet's own experiences through the mouth of the Yakṣa. This is not impossible, though in a poet of Kālidāsa's genius it is not necessary that it must be so. At any rate, the attempts to supply this autobiographical back-ground by a reference to Gupta times when Kālidāsa might have been away from home on a mission of state and thus suffered separation from his spouse must be considered unproven for want of definite evidence, and premature in view of the uncertainty about the date of the poet.

The richness of Kālidāsa's imagination is revealed in the colourful descriptions of Alakā, of Ujjayinī, of Himālaya and of Kailāsa. Indeed, Kālidāsa's handling of Nature in the first part of the poem shows how his art has been maturing. The description of the cloud's *route* would contain geographical descriptions of mountains, rivers, countries, villages, cities, etc., which would be dry and uninteresting. The poet, however, has touched them with his magic wand and invested them with beauty and freshness. Apart from the back-ground of the Yakṣa's emotion, the poet has conceived these objects



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of Nature in the relationship of friends, of guest and host, or, mainly, of lovers. This relationship is based either upon conventions or poetic fancy founded upon the actual relation of the objects. In this 'poetising' process, Kālidāsa does not sacrifice natural phenomena; rather his imaginative insight turns them to advantage, *e.g.*, in the latter half of the vs. आपृच्छस्व प्रियसखमसुं, etc. (12) or in तरिमन्काले नयनसलिलं, etc. (42). On the other hand, the poet can give us a simple objective description full of emotive power and richness of diction: *e.g.*

पाण्डुच्छायोपवनवृतयः केतकैः सूचिभिर्नै-

र्नीडारम्भैर्गृहबालिभुजामाकुलग्रामचैत्याः ।

त्वय्यासन्ने परिणतफलदयामजम्बूवनान्ताः

सम्पत्स्यन्ते कतिपयदिनस्थायिहंसा दृशार्णाः ॥ —23

For translation see *ante*

The poem abounds in figures of speech, उपमाs, उत्प्रेक्षाs, अर्थान्तरन्यास being the most outstanding. *Paronomasia* is also—though very rarely-used, and with good effect. In fact, these *Alamkāras* are so generously interspersed in the poem and are so intimately set in their context that they are like the flesh of the flesh and the bone of the bone of the poem.

Despite its erotic theme, the poem has a high moral tone. There are indeed some descriptions which are intensely erotic, and at least in one case (in stanza 43) the frankness is outrageous; yet love in the poem moves on a high plane. The Yakṣa pining in separation for his lawful spouse and the latter—an ideal house-wife—languishing in the absence of her lord and anxiously awaiting his return reveal a nobility and constancy of married love which are inspiring. Besides, what a wealth of noble sentiments—friendship, self-respect, goodness, compassion, fortitude, repaying an obligation, etc.,—lies enshrined in the poem, exalting its tone! Lines like याञ्च मोघा वरमधिगुणे नाधमे लब्धकामा । or आपन्नातिप्रशमनफलाः सम्पदो ह्युत्तमानान् । or कस्यात्यन्तं सुखमुपनतं दुःखमेकान्ततो वा । have passed into currency



among the higher strata of society. The observation of Bāṇa,

निर्गतासु न वा कस्य कालिदासस्य सृक्तियु ।

प्रातिर्मधुरसान्द्रासु मञ्जरीष्विव जायते ॥

(Who is not pleased with the well-turned phrases of Kālidāsa, sweet and full of sentiment like the blossoms dripping with honey?) is really as true of the beautiful phrases and sentiments contained in this poem of his as those in any other.

#### (4) RAGHUVAMŚA

Although the *Kumārasambhava* is recognized as a Mahākāvya, yet it is the *Raghuvamśa* which is a Mahākāvya *par excellence* as defined by writers on Poetics. Daṇḍin defines a Mahākāvya as a composition in verse which is not brief, and is divided into cantos which are not too long, are well dovetailed with each other and run in a uniform metre except in the concluding stanza or stanzas which should have a different metre. It must open with a benediction or salutation or reference to the plot. The story should be based on history or, at any rate, must be real. Its purpose should be the attainment of one of the four 'Objects of man' (Puruṣārthas), viz., Dharma (Duty and Piety), Artha (Worldly Success), Kāma (Love), and Mokṣa (Salvation). The hero should be clever and noble. The poem must be rich in feelings and sentiments, and must be embellished with descriptions of cities, oceans, mountains, seasons, the rise of the sun and the moon, sports in gardens and water, drinking, amorous pleasures, separation, marriage, birth of son, political discussions and missions, expeditions, battles and the success of the hero. It should also be decorated with figures of speech. Such a *Kāvya*, says Daṇḍin, ministers to the delight of the people and endures for ages. *Raghu*. satisfies all these requirements of a Mahākāvya as a literary form. It is a composition in verse divided into nineteen cantos of varying length and each running in a uniform metre except the ninth in which the latter half has no less than ten different metres used in it. The theme relates to the glorious dynasty of the *Raghus* of the solar race one of



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whose scions, King Ikṣvāku, dates back to the Ṛgvedic times, and which is sung of in the epics and the Purāṇas. And what a noble family it was since its qualities have so charmed—we may even say, hypnotised—the poet and merited such a generous tribute from him in the opening verses of the first canto! The poem obviously does not deal with the story of one single hero: Dilīpa, Raghu, Aja, Daśaratha, Rāma—this galaxy of 'clever and noble' kings provides the theme for the better part of the poem. Hillebrandt looked upon Rāma as occupying the centre of the poem (cantos 10-15), the description of his fore-fathers in cantos 1 to 9 serving as an introduction and that of his successors in cantos 16 to 19 as the conclusion of the poem. While this is true, we may not technically consider Rāma alone as the hero of the poem, lest we should thereby do injustice to at least one other hero—Raghu after whom the poem takes its name and whose glory and might Kālidāsa has described practically in the first half of the poem. At least, Viśvanātha, the author of the *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, found it necessary—obviously he had his eyes on *Raghu*.—to add that the Mahākāvya may have many kings born in one and the same noble family as heroes. The poem has its generous share of descriptions—of forests, hermitages, palaces, cities, morning, evening, expeditions, battles, drinking, separation, love-sport, seasons, marriage, etc. etc. Figures of speech are found practically in every other stanza. The sentiments (Rasas) and feelings (Bhāvas) are judiciously distributed and developed: *Heroic* in the descriptions of Raghu's expedition, Aja's fight with the hostile kings, Rāma's victory over Rāvaṇa, etc.; *Pathetic* in Aja's lamentation over the loss of his beloved, Indumatī; *Irate* when Paraśurāma appears before Rāma and addresses him in flaming rage; *Quietistic* in Vasiṣṭha's message to the grieving Aja; above all, *Erotic* in the description of the *Svayamvara* of Indumatī, the description of Spring in the ninth canto, the description of the water-sport in the sixteenth and, to crown all, the description of the *amours* of Agnivarṇa in the last canto. The remaining *Rasas* like the *Terrible*,



*Repellent, Wonderful and Humorous* are not altogether neglected. Daṇḍin's prophecy that a poem composed in this way will delight the people and live for ages has been literally fulfilled in the case of the *Raghuvamśa* whose popularity can well be gauged from the large number—thirty-three—of commentaries written upon it and which even to this day serves as a text-book for beginners in the study of the Sanskrit language and literature. Its popularity as well as poetic excellence have made Kālidāsa known, as much as any thing else, as *Raghukāra* (the author of the *Raghuvamśa*).

Great as Kālidāsa's indebtedness to the *Rāmāyaṇa* is, he has not followed the *Rāmāyaṇa* in the matter of the order of the kings of the Solar race; his order of kings is much more similar to that found in the *Vāyu Purāṇa* and the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, especially the former. In the *Pratimānātaka*—a drama ascribed to Bhāsa who was a predecessor of Kālidāsa, Rāma's ancestors are mentioned in the same order as that in *Raghu*. In the first fifteen cantos Dilīpa, Raghu, Aja, Daśaratha and Rāma are described, Rāma and Raghu standing out prominently among them. The sixteenth gives a description of Rāma's son Kuśa, followed by that of his son, Atithi, in the seventeenth. The eighteenth canto stands in sharp contrast to all the rest both for the large number of kings—21 in all—described therein and also the artificiality of these descriptions. The kings are described with the help of play on words so that puns and superficial—even unmeaning—comparisons become sufficient for the description of the king. For instance, King Pāriyātra had 'by his height vanquished the mountain Pāriyātra' (18.6) or king Dhruvasamdhī was 'comparable to Dhruva' and 'there was eternal peace (ध्रुवः सन्धिः) among the enemies who surrendered themselves to him'. (18.34). All kings are dismissed in a stanza or two except Sudarśana whose description as a minor king given in nineteen verses concludes the canto. The last canto contains a vivid description of the debauchee Agnivarṇa who died a victim of his own dissolute



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ways. His widow, who was *enciente*, ruled the kingdom with the help of ministers.

How striking is the contrast between the beginning and the ending of the poem! The poet undertook to describe the race of the *Raghus* "who were pure from birth, who persevered in their undertakings until they bore fruit, who ruled the earth as far as the oceans, whose chariots travelled up to heaven (1.5); who tended the sacrificial fires according to injunctions, who satisfied the supplicants by granting whatever they desired, who meted out punishment in proportion to the offence, who were awake at the proper time (1.6); who amassed wealth only for charity, who were sparing of speech in order to stick to truth, who aspired to conquer only for fame, who took to married life only for progeny (1.7); who acquired knowledge in childhood, who sought pleasures in youth, who resorted to an ascetic life in old age and who abandoned the mortal frame by means of yogic concentration" (1.8). And he ended with the description of a voluptuary who gave himself up so entirely to carnal pleasures that when he did accede to the request of his ministers that he should show himself to his loyal subjects anxious to see their king, he condescended to stretch his leg out of the window for them! This glaring inconsistency and the apparently abrupt close of the poem have raised the question whether the poem, as it is, is complete. A traditional report spoke of the *Raghu-vamśa* as consisting of twenty-two cantos, while another spoke of twenty-five. These claims are not substantiated by the production of definite evidence and must be dismissed as mere hearsay. On the other hand, Hillebrandt was struck by the contrast presented by the economical way in which the poet selected, by way of a back-ground to the description of Rāma, only a few names—Dilīpa, Raghu, Aja and Daśaratha—from the long line of his ancestors on the one hand and the sight of a crowd of twenty-one successors in the body of a single canto, *viz.*, the eighteenth on the other. This



contradiction, he explained, was due to the fact that the last two cantos are un-authentic. He supported this contention by pointing out the comparative shortness of these two cantos, the artificiality of description in the eighteenth, and the lack of taste in the nineteenth canto.

This view, however, has not found general acceptance. Commentators like Mallinātha have commented upon both of them and have not thrown the slightest suggestion about their spuriousness. Besides, citations from these cantos are found in works on Poetics from the eleventh century A.D. ; therefore they are certainly old. The last canto, apart from the question of the character of king Agnivarna, possesses poetic power and beauty and felicity of expression which we always associate with Kālidāsa's art. The last canto cannot be dismissed as a later addition.

Let us consider this question from another point of view. It is a strange coincidence, indeed, that we should be faced with the question of endings in all the poems of Kālidāsa except the *Rtusamhāra* which has a benedictory note at the end of every canto and therefore stands apart from the rest in this respect. As for the rest, we have already considered whether *Kumār.* ends at the eighth or the seventeenth canto ; we have seen how additional verses have been appended to *Megh.* in order to provide it with a 'proper' ending ; and now we are considering whether *Raghu.* is complete as it stands. The dramatic works of the poet can offer no guidance on this point, as they are tied down by the rules of dramaturgy to have benedictory verses at the end known as *Bharatavākya*s. The case of *Megh.*, however, may well be taken as an indication of Kālidāsa's way of concluding his poems, because the four or five verses found after मा भूदेवं क्षणमपि च ते विदुता विप्रयोगः (120) are by common consent later additions, and therefore that verse represents the ending of the poem as Kālidāsa gave it. This would show that Kālidāsa was not a stickler for rules that would insist upon a formal ending. He would



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not carry the theme on to the pedestrian rounding off—"And every one lived happily afterwards." His ending is full of suggestion. The theme is developed and carried on to completion as his poetic eye perceived it and the poem concluded leaving the strings of the reader's imagination vibrating with the wealth of suggestions it carries with it. Herein we have a corroboration of our view that the *Kumārasambhava* ends at the eighth canto, where the poet, after describing the amorous sports of Śiva and Pārvatī, says in the last verse that they thus passed a hundred and fifty seasons as if they were a single night. We have already seen how this last canto ends in an atmosphere of intense erotism and a subtle suggestion of the birth of Kumāra. Now compare and contrast this eighth canto of *Kumāra* with the nineteenth of *Raghu*. The comparison lies in the fact that both have an *extravaganza* of the erotic sentiment. Their contrast, however, is revealing. In *Kumār*, it is a lawfully wedded pair whose love-sports are described, here in *Raghu*, a lewd king is debauching himself in promiscuity. There the pair is divine, here the voluptuary is a human being. Śiva and Pārvatī revelled in amorous pleasures for a hundred and fifty seasons—eventually to beget heroic progeny; Agnivarṇa dissipated himself and succumbed to his passion—leaving his unfortunate queen to rear the foetus in her womb for the continuation of the line. The significance of this contrast is easily understood if we remember that all the compositions of Kālidāsa represent so many efforts on his part to body forth his own conception of love and indicate its place and importance in human life. It is probable that the poet who had fully developed and adequately expressed his conception of love in the *Śākuntala* (actually or conceptually) may have sought to bring out the contrast between love which is 'of the heart' and is consecrated by wedlock and passion which will only feed on promiscuity. He concluded *Kumār*, in an atmosphere of sublime conjugal happiness of Śiva and Pārvatī and concluded *Raghu*, in sharp contrast in order to show how man, ever so nobly born as Agnivarṇa was,



has a miserable end if he trifled with love. Thus the nineteenth canto, besides pointedly suggesting that the race of the *Raghus* was on the decline, brings out its contrast with the eighth canto of *Kumār*. Looked at from this point of view, the nineteenth may well be the concluding canto of the *Raghuvamśa*.

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We shall now review the contents of the poem. In the illustrious family of Manu was born Dilīpa, a strong, pious and generous king who "by reason of his providing for their education, protection and maintenance was the father of his subjects, their fathers being only the causes of their birth" (24) and who "levied taxes on his subjects only for their well-being; indeed, the sun draws up water only to return it a thousandfold" (18). He had no offspring. So, with a view to consult his family-priest, the great sage Vasiṣṭha, he started in the company of his beloved queen Sudakṣiṇā for the sage's hermitage—seated in a chariot rattling with a deep agreeable sound, "enjoying pleasant breezes which were charged with the fragrance of the exudation of *sāla* trees, which blew about the pollen of flowers and which waved the forest-groves, (38) listening to the charming two-fold notes—resembling the *Ṣaḍja* tone—of peacocks who had turned their faces up at the sound of the chariot-wheels, (39) accepting blessings as well as welcome from the sacrificial hosts in villages which were marked by sacrificial posts and were granted by (Dilīpa) himself, (44) and enquiring the names of wild trees on the way from the aged shepherds who approached them with (presents of) fresh *ghee*" (45). They reached the hermitage in the evening. When Vasiṣṭha enquired about his health and weal, the King replied, "When you, born of Brahmā, are looking after me, how should my prosperity not be uninterrupted? Yet, the earth with all its islands and producing riches does not please me who have not yet seen a worthy offspring in this your daughter-in-law (65). So be pleased, O revered Sage, to bring it about that I may be freed from the debt to



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my fore-fathers." By means of his *yogic* powers Vasiṣṭha saw and informed the King that once while returning from heaven he had neglected to pay respects to the celestial cow who was seated under a celestial tree and so he was cursed by her that he would have no progeny until her daughter was propitiated by him. While the sage was advising Dilīpa to worship his own cow Nandinī, the latter arrived—"red and shiny like tender leaves, bearing a slightly curved tuft of hair on the forehead like twilight bearing the new moon," (83) "having pot-like udders and showering the earth with lukewarm milk—more sacred than the ceremonial sacrificial bath—gushing out at the sight of her calf." (84). This, said the sage, was an auspicious sign, and he asked the King to worship her till she was propitiated (I). Next morning, the King followed the cow into the forest and served her by offering tasty mouthfuls of grass, patting her and warding off the fleas. "He remained standing if she stood, walked if she moved forth, kept himself firmly seated if she squatted, drank water only after she did—he followed her like a veritable shadow." (6). The queen worshipped the cow both in the morning and in the evening and kept company with her lord as he waited upon Nandinī during the night. After three weeks had thus gone by, the cow once entered a cavern of the Himālaya overgrown with grass near the fall of the Ganges, and the King, who was charmed by the scenery around, was startled to hear her cry and see her in the clutches of a lion. He drew out an arrow, but was paralysed in the arm. The lion then said to him that he was an attendant of Śiva appointed to guard the *Devadāru* tree which was a favourite of Pārvatī, and was allowed to live on any beast that came his way. "You may therefore return, shedding off all shame. You have demonstrated your devotion to the sage. Moreover, the charge which is impossible to protect even by means of arms does not detract from the honour of warriors." (40). Dilīpa expressed great regard for the orders of Śiva and offered himself to the lion in lieu of the cow which belonged to the sage. The lion laughed



at the "foolishness" of the King who was desirous of giving up so much for so little. "Moved to great compassion as he was being gazed at with terror-stricken eyes by the cow in the clutches of the lion", the King replied, "The noble word *Kṣatra* has come to mean 'one who protects from injury' in the three worlds. What is the use of the kingdom or life sullied by scandal to one if his conduct is the reverse of this?" (53) and again repeated his request to the lion. And as he stood, his head bent down, expecting a leap of the lion, there fell a shower of flowers on him—the lion was only an illusion created by the cow to test his devotion. As asked by the cow who was now pleased with him the King drank her milk as if it were 'spotless glory incarnate'. The royal pair then returned to the capital. The queen became *enciēte* (II) and in course of time gave birth to a son. "Only three things—the moon-white royal umbrella and the pair of *chowries*—the King could not offer as presents to the maid-servants who reported to him, in words sweet like ambrosia, the birth of the prince" (16) who was named *Raghu* derived from the root *ragh*, to go, "so that he may go to the end of learning as well as enemies in battle." *Raghu* was duly educated. He grew to manhood with a strong build, was married to a number of royal princesses, and was crowned heir-apparent. *Dilīpa* then commenced his hundredth *Aśvamedha* sacrifice and appointed *Raghu* to guard the horse as it moved about. The horse suddenly disappeared and *Raghu* by the favour of *Nandini* could see *Indra* in the east fleeing away with it. His request for the return of the horse was turned down by *Indra* but, in the battle that followed, the prince pleased the god by his valour. *Indra* agreed to endow *Dilīpa* with the fruit of his sacrifice, though the horse was not returned. The prince returned to the capital where his father had already been apprised of the encounter by a messenger of *Indra*. *Dilīpa* handed over the kingdom to *Raghu* and retired into a forest. (III)



When autumn came making the rivers fordable and roads with mud dried up, Raghu started on a military expedition for the conquest of all the quarters. With a huge army he first marched against and conquered the eastern kings and reached the shore of the eastern ocean (Mahodadhi) 'dark with *Tālī* trees.' The Suhmas capitulated. The Vangas proud of their naval strength were uprooted but re-installed by Raghu 'like Kalama rice transplanted'. The Kalinga king offered resistance with weapons and elephants but was defeated. Raghu then went south, crossed the Kāverī and reached the foot of the Malaya mountain. The Pāṇḍyas could not withstand Raghu's might and they offered to him excellent pearls obtained from the ocean at the mouth of the Tāmraparṇī. Then turning back along the west coast, the conqueror crossed the Sahya mountain; "the Kerala women who had left off decoration through fear were supplied with powder for their hair by the dust of his armies;" and the Aparānta king readily paid tribute to him. Next, Raghu went by the overland route against the Pārasikas. "He could not stand the flush of wine on the lotus-faces of the Yavana (Ionian) women;" a terrible battle took place with the bearded westerners strong in cavalry. However, they suffered heavily and sued for peace. Then he proceeded to the North across the river Vamkṣu or Sindhu "where his horses relieved their fatigue and shook off the filaments of saffron sticking to their necks on account of their rolling on its banks," (67) and defeated the Hūṇas and the Kāmbojas. In the uplands of the Himālayas he fought with the mountain-tribes and the Utsavasamketas and crossed the river Lauhityā—which terrified the king of Prāgjyotiṣa. The king of the Kāmarūpas offered him precious tributes. After 'the conquest of the Quarters,' Raghu returned to the capital with all the wealth seized in the campaign and performed the *Viśvajit* sacrifice at which he gave away everything in charity (IV).

Once a young Brahmin came to Raghu who welcomed him with offerings placed in earthen vessels—so impoverished he



had been by his liberality at the *Viśvajit* sacrifice. Kautsa, the young guest, said that he had come to the Emperor for a sum of fourteen crores of golden coins which his preceptor, provoked by the pupil's persistence in having it named had demanded by way of fees. But, said he, he would now try elsewhere "for even the Cātaka bird does not press an autumnal cloud which has emptied its contents." Raghu was stung in the quick by this—the first case—of a supplicant going disappointed from him. He asked Kautsa to wait for a couple of days and contemplated extorting the required sum from the treasurer of gods, Kubera, who, however, knowing Raghu's might, voluntarily filled his treasury to overflowing. And the people witnessed the rare but noble spectacle of "a supplicant who was unwilling to take more than what was to be given to his preceptor and the King who gave more than the supplicant asked for". As a result of Kautsa's blessings, Raghu got a son, Aja by name. When the prince in course of time grew into a youth of exquisite charms and accomplishments he was sent by his father to attend the *Svayamvara* of Indumatī, the younger sister of the king of the Vidarbhas. On the way he had an adventure with an elephant who was really a Gandharva, which earned him the *Sammohana* missile. He was duly received by the Vidarbha king and, having passed an almost sleepless night in golden dreams about the Vidarbha princess, was awakened in the morning by the sweet strains of the Court minstrels (V). Aja went to the assembly hall which was gaily and splendidly decorated; many kings resplendent in their rich attire had gathered there, seeking the fair Indumatī's hand. The princess, escorted by the maid Sunandā who gave an introduction of each king as they approached him, passed by them one after another leaving "each king looking pale like a turret on the royal road at night when the lighted torch passes beyond", and came to Aja and fell in love with him at first sight. The garland was put round Aja's neck by the nurse on behalf of the bashful princess 'as if it was love incarnate.' (VI). The bridal procession enters



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the capital, the marriage ceremony is duly performed and Aja accompanied by his bride starts for his father's capital. His way, however, was blocked by the disappointed kings who had made a common cause to snatch the princess from him. A battle followed; Aja used the soporific missile *Sammohana* against the powerful host of enemies and returned victorious to his father. Raghu then decided to renounce the world (VII) and handed over the kingdom to his son. 'The subjects looked upon the new king as if he was Raghu rejuvenated; for he had inherited not only his wealth but all his qualities, too' (8). Raghu then died a yogin's death and Aja ruled the kingdom with vigilance. Indumatī presented her lord with a son who was named Daśaratha. Once while Aja was sporting in the garden with his beloved, a garland of celestial flowers slipped down from Nārada's lute as he was moving in the sky, and fell on Indumatī who reeled and expired on the spot. The loving husband, on regaining consciousness from his swoon, "took on his lap the body of his beloved with its colour changed on account of the extinction of life, looking thereby like the moon in the morning bearing the black mark of the deer" and lamented in pathetic strains that moved even the trees to tears of sympathy. Vasiṣṭha sent a message of consolation revealing therein the antecedents of Indumatī who was in fact the celestial damsel Hariṇī whom the sage Trṇabindu had cursed to mortal life until the contact with celestial flowers released her therefrom. He tried to console the king by dwelling upon the evanescence of worldly existence and the eternity of the soul, which therefore did not deserve to be grieved about. Aja, however, remained disconsolate; he managed to live on for eight years so that the child Daśaratha could grow up in the meantime and ultimately, seized as he was by an incurable disease, fasted unto death and rejoined his beloved in the pleasure-halls of heaven. (VIII). Daśaratha proved himself quite an able ruler who not only exercised sovereignty over other kings but whose assistance was sought even by Indra in his battles with the demons. He married three queens



—the princesses of the Kosalas, the Kekayas and the Magadhas, and performed so many sacrifices that the banks of the rivers Tamasā and Sarayū were dotted with golden sacrificial posts. Then came Spring—"first the appearance of flowers, then fresh sprouts and next the hum of bees and (notes of) cuckoos—in this sequence the vernal season set in and exhibited itself in the forest-region abounding in trees" (26). Aśoka, Kuravaka, Bakula, Tilaka—all burst into blossom. Bees and *Koils* sang lustily. "By garments outdoing the redness of dawn, by barley-sprouts fastened to the ears, and by the cooing of cuckoos—by these forces of Love, gay persons were rendered interested solely in women" (43). Daśaratha having enjoyed the best of the season in the company of his queens went out for hunting. There he shot an arrow in the direction of a sound which he thought was that of a grunting elephant, but was shocked to hear a piteous cry, for he had hit a boy who was filling his jar with water. He carried the wounded boy at a distance to his parents who became frantic with sorrow at the death of their only child. The father cursed Daśaratha—"Like me, thou, too, shalt meet thy end in old age through grief for thy son," to which the latter replied :

शापोऽप्यवृष्टतनयाननपद्मशोभे

सानुग्रहो भगवता मयि पतितोऽयम् ॥

(Even this curse is a mixed blessing conferred by you upon me who have never seen the beauty of the lotus-like face of a son.) With mingled feelings of joy and sorrow the King returned to his capital (IX).

Daśaratha commenced a sacrifice for the purpose of getting a son. About this time the gods who were being tyrannized over by the great demon Rāvaṇa approached Viṣṇu and begged for his help. The great god said he was himself going to be born on the earth for the destruction of Rāvaṇa. In the meanwhile Daśaratha, at his sacrifice, received from the fire-god a pot of milk-porridge which he distributed among



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Kausalyā and Kaikeyī, who in their turn divided their shares with the third queen Sumitrā. Then Kausalyā gave birth to Rāma—God Viṣṇu Himself in human form, Kaikeyī to Bharata, and Sumitrā to Laxmaṇa and Śatrughna. The four princes, by their dispositions, fell into two pairs—Rāma and Laxmaṇa being drawn to each other, and Bharata and Śatrughna doing likewise among them. (X). Young Rāma accompanied by Laxmaṇa was sent by Daśaratha to Viśvāmitra's hermitage in order to guard the sage's sacrifices from the inroads of demons. On the way he destroyed the demoness Tāḍakā who, as she dropped down with her heart pierced by an arrow, "shook not only the region of her own forest but also the Glory of Rāvaṇa which was stable (till now) on account of the conquest of the three worlds." (19). The two princes enabled the sage to carry his sacrifice to completion by destroying the demon hordes. Viśvāmitra then took Rāma and Laxmaṇa to Mithilā, Janaka's capital, where Rāma with great ease broke the mighty *Pināka* bow and thereby won the hand of Janaka's daughter, Sītā, who was born in a supernatural manner. Daśaratha came to Mithilā and was happy to celebrate the marriage of all his four princes with the princesses of Mithilā. When he was on his way back to his own capital along with the princes and their brides, they were all confronted by Paraśurāma who had vowed vengeance on the entire Kṣatriya tribe. The latter, however, soon realized that Rāma was God Viṣṇu Himself and climbed down before the superior might of the latter. (XI). When the preparations for the coronation of Rāma were being made, Kaikeyī "soiled them with her tears" and "being conciliated by her lord, that irate woman blurted out the two boons which had been promised by him just as the earth when showered upon by rain throws up a couple of serpents lurking in the hole. (5). Rāma, along with Sītā and Laxmaṇa gladly went into exile for a period of fourteen years; the aged king could not bear separation from Rāma and died of sorrow. Bharata disowned his own mother, went to Rāma in the jungle to persuade him to come back but returned unsuccessful, though he



brought with him a pair of sandals of Rāma in whose name he, practising penances himself, afterwards, ruled from Nandi-grāma. In the jungle "Sītā walking behind Rāma appeared like Laxmī, enamoured of virtues, following him even though interdicted by Kaikeyī :"

बभौ तमनुगच्छन्ती विदेहाधिपतेः सुता ।

प्रतिषिद्धापि कैकेय्या लक्ष्मीरिव गुणोन्मुखी ॥

Then Rāma's taking up residence in Pancavaṭī, Sītā's abduction by Rāvaṇa, Rāma's alliance with the monkey chief Sugrīva, Hanūmān's crossing over to Lankā and delivering Rāma's message to Sītā, Rāma's march, the battles between the demons and the monkeys, the ultimate destruction of Rāvaṇa, Sītā's fire-ordeal and Rāma's start for journey home in the aerial car—Puspaka—events which are known to everyone from the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* form the contents of this canto (XII). In the next canto Rāma flies in the air from Ceylon to Ayodhyā. They are all warmly welcomed by Bharata followed by the populace of the capital. (XIII) Then, Rāma was crowned King, and the people rejoiced for "as he was averse to greed, they prospered ; as he removed the danger of obstacles, they performed religious rites ; as he exercised restraint over them, they had a father in him, and as he relieved their sorrow, they had a son in him." (23). Having attended to his duties, Rāma disported himself in the company of Sītā who once expressed her desire incidental to pregnancy to revisit the holy waters of the Ganges. In the meantime Rāma heard a rumour that people did not quite approve of his taking Sītā back after she had resided in the home of Rāvaṇa. His heart bled—' Shall I ignore this scandal about me ? Or, shall I abandon my blameless wife ? Unable to resort to either of these two alternatives, he was in a mental condition oscillating like a swing.' (34). He decided to wipe out this scandal by abandoning his wife ; for "I know that she is blameless, but public disapproval is more important for me"—said he to his brothers whom he had summoned to acquaint them with



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the situation and his own resolve. At Rāma's behest, Laxmaṇa took the poor unsuspecting Sītā in a chariot to the vicinity of Vālmiki's hermitage on the bank of the Ganges, and then revealed his mission to her. Sītā fainted. When she revived, she "did not speak ill of her lord, although he had turned her out without any fault, but deprecated again and again her own self as one who had committed sins and had therefore to suffer continuous misery." (57) She said to Laxmaṇa who asked her if she had any message to send:

- (1) You should say to that King in my name: "Purified as I was in fire in your presence, you still have deserted me on hearing a rumour among the people—is that (act of yours), pray, worthy of your illustrious family?
- (2) Or rather, this (act) of you who have a benevolent disposition should not be misconstrued as a wanton act towards me. It is really the unbearable, terrific crash of the maturation of my sins committed in previous lives.
- (3) Having spurned Royal Fortune which had made advances to you before, you retired into the forest in company with me. Now, therefore, since she has acquired a footing, she, out of excessive rage, could not suffer me residing in your home.
- (4) Having once, through your favour, been the refuge of the female ascetics whose husbands were oppressed by demons, how shall I (myself) now approach another person for the sake of shelter while you are as powerful as ever?
- (5) Or, why—I would become indifferent about this wretched life which is (now) worthless on account of everlasting separation from you, if (only) your seed lying in my womb, which must needs be protected, did not stand in my way.
- (6) As it is, I shall try, after delivery, to practise penance with my eyes fixed on the sun so that even in the next life

I may again have *you* as my husband—and there may be no separation.

- (7) The protection of the castes and the life-stages—this is indeed the duty of the king as laid down by Manu. Therefore, even though turned out in this way, I deserve to be looked after (by you) in common with other ascetics. (For the original, see Appendix B.)

She was then taken by Vālmiki to his hermitage where she 'wearing bark garments sustained her body with sylvan food (only) for the continuation of the line of her husband.' Rāma too learnt the message from Laxmaṇa and "at once broke into tears; for, afraid of the public scandal, he had turned Sītā out of his home but not out of his heart." (XIV). Then Rāma sent Śatrughna against the demon Lavaṇa who was harrassing the sages. Śatrughna fought with the demon, killed him and founded the city of Mathurā on the Jamna. Sītā in the meanwhile had given birth to twins who were named Kuśa and Lava by the sage Vālmiki who also consecrated and educated them properly and made them sing his own composition about Rāma. Rāma had in the meantime destroyed the Śūdra Śambūka who was practising penances forbidden for him and commenced an Aśvamedha sacrifice, keeping a golden image of Sītā as his consort. Kuśa and Lava moved about reciting the *Rāmāyaṇa*; Rāma—and his brothers—saw them, heard them and recognized them as his own sons. Sītā was asked to convince the people about the innocence of her character; she was taken at her request into the womb of the earth by the Goddess of earth; and after some time Rāma returned to heaven. (XV).

Once at dead of night, Kuśa, now the eldest among the members of the Raghu family, lay wide awake in his bed-chamber "wherein the lamps were motionless and attendants asleep, when he saw a youthful woman, never seen by him before, dressed like a woman whose husband is journeying abroad" (4). Being questioned by him, the woman replied



“Know me, O King, to be the lord-less presiding deity of that beautiful city (Ayodhyā) whose residents were led away by your father when he departed for his own residence (Vai-kunṭha). (9). Such as I was, having eclipsed Alakā with riches revealed by festivals on account of efficient rule, I am now reduced to a sorry plight, even while you, a scion of the solar race and endowed with all power, are still here.” (10). At her request Kuśa left his city Kuśāvati and, accompanied by a large following, went to Ayodhyā which was “rendered new” by bands of artisans, and which soon attained to its pristine glory under him. In course of time the hot season set in; Kuśa enjoyed the season with water-sport in the company of his queens. While thus sporting, he lost the ‘ornament ensuring victory’ which he had received from his father. As it could not be recovered from the water by ordinary means, he prepared to strike an arrow at the demon Kumuda who resided in the river and was suspected of having stolen it. The demon, however, appearing before Kuśa, explained the situation and offered his younger sister Kumudvatī to him in marriage. (XVI). Kuśa had a son, Atithī by name, from Kumudvatī. After Kuśa’s death in a battle with a demon who too was killed, the young prince Atithī was crowned King. He shaped his conduct as a king in accordance with the rules of political science and soon became the overlord of all kings. (XVII). The eighteenth canto, as we have already seen, contains a brief running description of the next twenty-one kings; the last of them Sudarśana, who was six years old, was crowned King and was looked upon with great admiration and warm love by his subjects. In course of time he attained to youth and married royal princesses. (XVIII). His son, Agnivarna “felt no difficulty in protecting what had been acquired; for, the earth was kept ready by his father, who had destroyed the enemies by his arms, for him to enjoy and (did) not require to be conquered. (3). So he gave himself up entirely to the company of women and unbridled pleasures. This *saturnalia* exhausted him: he was seized with consumption



to which he succumbed, leaving his queen who was then carrying to look after the kingdom on behalf of her prospective son. (XIX).

The contents of the *Raghuvamśa* at once strike us by the panorama they unfold of the illustrious solar race. In *Kumār*, or *Megh*., the poet had a theme which was organic, *i.e.*, it turned upon the story of a hero and heroine in which the various situations rallied round, and were directed to, the achievement of a particular purpose. He had therefore the natural advantage of securing unity of purpose—so necessary in a work of art—in those two poems. In *Raghu*, on the other hand, the theme turns on the description of a whole family of kings of whom no less than twenty-nine the poet has found it necessary to notice. The obvious danger in such a theme is that the poem would tend to become discussive, and loosely-welded in its components and lack the unity of purpose which otherwise would be its. And yet Kālidāsa risked such an attempt, for he could hardly resist the temptation to sing the glory of Rāma and Śītā—the idols of the people—whom the sage Vālmīki, the first Poet, has immortalized in his epic, the *Rāmāyaṇa*. He would not, however, deal with the story of Rāma's life alone, for that would naturally force a comparison of his work with that of the Great Vālmīki for whom he had the greatest reverence; he refers to the sage as "the poet," "the first poet," and his composition as "the first creation of the poet's art." Therefore he varied his approach and essayed to sing of the solar race in which Rāma was born. Of course, it was not his purpose—it could not be—to give a historical description of the solar race. He therefore selected outstanding and otherwise better-known names from among Rāma's ancestors; and as the *Rāmāyaṇa* frequently mentions Rāma as a descendant of Raghu more than anybody else's, he decided to devote the better part of his attention to him from among them. The first two cantos apparently dealing with King Dilīpa are significant mainly as describing the circumstances of Raghu's birth.



The next three are taken up with the description of his growth to manhood, his invincible might and generosity of heart. Even in the following two cantos—sixth and seventh—the figure of this mighty sovereign is seen in the back-ground of the *Śvayamvara* and marriage of Indumatī with Aja and the latter's combat with the hostile kings. When in the ninth canto we come to Daśaratha, we are too near Rāma not to be reminded of him. In fact, Kālidāsa himself conveys this impression when, while describing the birth of Daśaratha in the eighth canto, he speaks of him as 'the (would-be) father of the destroyer of Rāvaṇa.' All this clearly shows how, having once selected a theme which held out little promise of organic unity, the poet attempted to overcome his difficulties with the aid of his art.

Nevertheless, *Raghu*. has remained largely a composite poem—an assemblage of unintegrated episodes which are valuable in and for themselves. There is no denying the fact that the poem contains passages which have very little of poetry in them, e.g., Atithī's description in the seventeenth canto. As Ryder has observed about this poem, "We must regard it as a poem in which single episodes take a stronger hold upon the reader than does the unfolding of an ingenious plot." Of such single episodes the poem has indeed plenty. The episode of Dilīpa and the lion, Raghu's encounter with Indra, Raghu and the needy Kautsa, Indumatī's *Śvayamvara*, Aja's lament, Vasiṣṭha's message, description of Spring, Daśaratha and his curse, Gods' prayer to Viṣṇu, Rāma vs. Paraśurāma, the scandal about Sītā, Sītā's abandonment and her message, the reunion of Rāma with his sons, the tragic end of Sītā, the appearance of the presiding deity of Ayodhyā before Kuśa at midnight, etc.,—these varied 'slides' pass before our eyes one after another and leave us enthralled by their beauty of conception and finish of execution. Outstanding exploits or episodes in the lives of the different kings are lighted up by a concentrated focus. Description and narration are judi-

to which he succumbed, leaving his queen who was then carrying to look after the kingdom on behalf of her prospective son. (XIX).

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ciously intermingled. Dialogues or addresses are sprinkled about. Sentiments rise and fall and change. By these and similar devices the poet has tried to give to the poem the power to sustain interest.

The poet's power of description has been amply revealed in his other poems; *Raghu*. only underlines it, as it were. How soft and mellow the description of Vasiṣṭha's hermitage at eventide! How gorgeous the assembly hall where the richly decorated kings had gathered for the *Svayamvara* of Indumatī! How pitiable and tragic the plight of Ayodhyā after Rāma's departure! Above all, what a specimen of bardic poetry Kālidāsa has given in those nine stanzas of scintillating beauty describing the morning in the fifth canto!

The poet's narrative art is seen to advantage in this poem, especially in the eleventh and twelfth cantos where he has to cover a good deal of the contents of the *Rāmāyaṇa* within a very small compass. He flits from point to point in the detailed story of Rāma with the help of a simile or a fancy or a generalization (*Arthāntaranyāsa*) and tries in this manner to maintain the poetic aspect of the narrative. Indeed, the judicious discrimination which he has exercised in emphasising some episodes of the Rāma story and abridging others shows how even in his anxiousness to remain loyal to the *Rāmāyaṇa* he was not prepared to sacrifice the poetic aspect of his work. To the poetic vision and judgment of Kālidāsa it is that we owe the beautiful—in places, inspiring—description of the return journey of Rāma with Sītā and others in the aerial car in a whole canto, (13) or the moving delineation of human feelings in another (14) out of a total of five which contain the Rāma story. His delicate sense of propriety and dignity is revealed often when he has to speak of a retiring king and his young heir-apparent in the same breath; of course, here his rich imagination renders yeoman service. The most eloquent illustration of his resourcefulness and subtle sense of propriety is furnished by the *Svayamvara* of Indumatī in which



he has first unreservedly described each king in glowing terms and then explained why Indumatī still rejected him. To explain seven such rejections was no easy task, as there was the danger of being inconsistent if the kings were afterwards to be shown as full of faults and therefore unworthy. Kālidāsa with great ingenuity has steered clear of this danger of inconsistency. His main explanation is *भिन्नचिह्निं लोकः* (Tastes differ), and this he has used in all cases in a refreshing variety of ways.

Unlike *Kumār.* or *Megh.*, the *Raghuvamśa* deals with characters that are human beings, and for that reason are nearer to us. Although there are divine or super-human aspects in the lives of the heroes, yet we feel our responsive chord is struck by Dilīpa and Sudakṣiṇā undertaking all hardships for the birth of a son, Raghu's child-hood, Aja's love and grief, Bharata's brotherly love and self-denial, and Rāma and Sītā—the paragons of conjugal love. In fact, the delineation of human life and aspirations is all along infused with high ideals of conduct and character: kings ruling with justice, free from greed, helping even gods against the forces of evil; sages practising penances and religious rites and acting as the custodians of the spiritual and moral well-being of the people; demons and other perpetrators of crime being brought to book. The feminine characters, though differing in their characteristics, are yet all exemplars of faithful married life. Sudakṣiṇā the matronly queen, Indumatī the beautiful, Kausalyā and Sumitrā—the self-denying queens and mothers, Kaikeyī the mother redeemed after her fall; Sītā—and what shall we say about this ideal but tragic figure whom Kālidāsa has portrayed so vividly and so deeply in spite of the limitations of space at his disposal? She has the loveliness of Indumatī, the matronly serenity—even in youth—of Sudakṣiṇā and nobility and self-denial, greater than those of Kausalyā or Sumitrā. Her message to Rāma is an *epitome* of the ideals of Indian womanhood: the tragic vein bursting into eloquence, the nobility,

the dignity, the restraint, the unshakable faithfulness and the magnanimity of the woman's soul in agony lift Sītā into the ideal plane, leaving us wondering with admiration at the well-nigh divine heights which the feminine heart was able to scale.

Like the other poems, *Raghu*. amply bears out the view that Kālidāsa is a master of the Vaidarbhi style which contains a judicious use of compounds, is perspicuous and full of harmony. The poet's mastery over language is matched only by its simplicity and chastity. The figures of speech, especially those of sense, are profusely employed, and that, too, mostly with Kālidāsan aptness and elegance. There are, it must be admitted, occasional similes which smack of the pedant. Assonance, alliterations, etc., are also used: indeed, in the ninth canto the poet has exhibited his capacity to write in the artificial style by using the yamaka (e.g.: कुखका खकारणंता ययुः) in fifty-four verses.

As much by reason of its human interest and lofty moral tone as by the poetic beauty of the various episodes, the *Raghuvamśa* has remained a cherished possession to the elite in India.

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## IV

### HIS WORKS—DRAMAS

त्रैगुण्योद्धवमत्र लोकचरितं नानारसं दृश्यते  
नाट्यं भिन्नरुचेर्जनस्य बहुधाप्येकं समाराधनम् ॥ †

—*Mālavik.* 1.4

“...Playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as its were, the mirror up to nature ; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.”

—*Hamlet*, III. 2

The sun had set : the red splendour of the twilight which bathed the great temple of Mahākāla and the vast concourse of people which had gathered there from far and wide for the celebration of a festival in honour of the great God with an eerie glow had given way to dusk and then to darkness. The sounds of the temple bells and conches and drums at the evening worship were dying away in the distance. The large camp outside was being lit up with lamps and torches. Inside, in the spacious court of the temple, people were assembling in their hundreds and taking up seats where they thought they could have a good view of the performance—for they were all collecting there for witnessing the staging of *Svapna-vāsavadatta*—a drama composed by Bhāsa. Bhāsa was a name familiar to them for they had often seen and admired the presentation of his dramas which vivified the episodes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* or the *Mahābhārata* or delighted them with the exploits of Udayana, the King of the Vatsas. To this assemblage came pundits and Paurāṇikas, teachers and pupils, and common men. Among them came a young man unknown to most of them. Some, however, saw him and recognized him and, as he passed by, talked about his great learning—espe-

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† Translation—Herein are seen the actions of the people inspired by the three Qualities and varied in sentiments. Indeed, Nāṭya is the one common means of entertaining people, however widely their tastes might differ.

cially his mastery over the intricacies of the rules of dramatic art as laid down by Bharata, the father of dramaturgy. He took his seat on the ground among the throng. His face—intelligence written upon it is expectant. His mind wanders back to the many performances he has seen of the dramas of Bhāsa and Saumilla and Kaviputra; he remembers how they brought down the house and won for their authors a place in the hearts of the people. He figures out the light and shade in their works, considers the artistic value of—the Preliminaries are over, the Sūtra-dhāra (Stage-manager) commences his address—the performance has begun.

The performance ended about midnight. The young man was full of enthusiasm and excitement and thought. "I *must* write a drama myself," he was heard to mutter as he threaded his way home in the darkness. Had he not studied and mastered Bharata's rules? Had he not been closely watching the 'practical' side of the dramas whenever—and this was often enough—he had been witnessing their performances? And—had he not already in mind a theme suitable for dramatic treatment and whose design he had already laid out? He reached home, and threw himself into the bed. Restless and sleepless he lay. Thoughts came crowding to his brain—Suppose he wrote a drama—a very good drama; what then? Where was the chance of bringing it to the boards? And, who would care to interest himself in the non-descript effort of an enthusiastic youngster when the auditoriums were resounding with *encores* which Bhāsa and Saumilla and Kaviputra were drawing? He had, however, great faith that the heart of the people was sound. Merits were bound to commend themselves to the discriminating *connoisseurs* of the Drama. The hours passed by...two,...three,...four. He rose from his bed, lighted the lamp in his study, drew out a bundle of palm leaves, took out his quill and—(thus possibly) *Mālavikāgnimitra*, the first of Kālidāsa's dramas, was born.†

† This episode is an imaginative reconstruction of the contents of the Prologue of the *Mālavikāgnimitra*.



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## (1) MĀLAVIKĀGNIMITRA.

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And here is its plot: A maid-servant of Dhārīṇī, the eldest queen of King Agnimitra, is carrying a ring with the image of a snake on it, when she meets another, Bakulāvalikā by name, who was going to Gaṇadāsa, the dancing-teacher, to enquire how Mālavikā, the young girl recently placed under him, was progressing in her dancing-lessons. The conversation that ensues between the two reveals how the King once went to the studio where the queen was inspecting a fresh portrait of hers with Mālavikā's figure drawn prominently among the servants. On seeing this figure of a stranger, the King asked who she was. The queen hesitated to reply but the child princess Vasumatī (who was a sister to the queen) interposed: "Sir, it is Mālavikā." Thenceforward the queen took greater precautions to keep Mālavikā away from the eyes of her husband. The maid-servants then go their own way. Then enters Gaṇadāsa—in a mood of self-exaltation: "Of course, every one thinks highly of his hereditary lore. But it is no idle sense of importance we cherish regarding 'the representational art.' ( नाट्य ). For, sages look upon it as a lovely visual sacrifice to gods; it was divided into two by Rudra in his own body which was shared by Umā. Herein are seen the actions of the people inspired by the three Qualities and varied in sentiments. Indeed, *Nāṭya* is the one common means of entertaining people, however widely their tastes might differ." He speaks with admiration about Mālavikā's intellectual gifts and shows a natural curiosity about her identity and antecedents. Bakulāvalikā informs him that Mālavikā was sent as a 'present' to the queen by her step-brother, Vīrasena, who was a commander in charge of a frontier-fortress on the banks of the Narmadā.

In the next scene the King is seen looking into state-affairs in consultation with his minister and ordering military operations against the Vidarbha King, who had not sent a

satisfactory reply about the release of his own cousin, Mādhavasena, who was attacked and taken prisoner by Vidarbha officers while he, along with his younger sister, was on his way to Agnimitra's capital with a view to offering her hand to him in marriage. The state business over, the Vidūṣaka arrives—"our minister in charge of another department," as the King describes him. The Vidūṣaka informs the King about the plan he had thought out—and even put into execution—for satisfying his desire to see Mālavikā in person. Just then they hear angry voices behind the curtain, whereupon the King remarks to the Vidūṣaka, "Friend, here's the tree of your good stratagem putting forth blossoms!" Gaṇadāsa and Haradaṭṭa, both dancing-teachers enjoying the patronage of the queen and the King respectively, have quarrelled among themselves; so they come to the King and request him to test them in their art and adjudge their relative merits. The King, however, declines to act as the judge as he might be suspected of partiality for his own protégé, Haradaṭṭa. He therefore decides that the contest must be held in the presence of the queen, too. The queen arrives there in the company of the learned nun Paṇḍitā Kauśikī. The latter is invited to officiate as the judge. The queen smells some deep-laid plan in the whole affair but much against her will she consents to the holding of the contest. The nun Parivrājikā (as she is called) rules that in view of the perfect mastery on the part of the two contesting dancing-teachers over their art, their relative merits must be adjudged in terms of their ability and skill in imparting their art to others; and therefore each one was to give an exhibition of his art through his pupil. Naturally, Gaṇadāsa staked his all on Mālavikā of whose superb qualities he was in no doubt whatever. The arrangements in the theatre are made: the sound of the drums is heard, and the royal party leaves for the theatre to witness the demonstration. (Act I). The curtain rises and Mālavikā appears before the royal party, exquisite in her grace of body which "seems to have been fashioned after the desire of the dancing-



master." She commences her part by singing the snatch : " My love is difficult to secure. Shed thy hopes, O heart, about him. Oh ! My left eye is throbbing I know not why. How is that person, seen after a long time, to be approached ? O Lord, dependent as I am, know that I am pining for you." She then demonstrates the different moods in this song by means of dancing. When she has finished, she is about to leave the stage when the Vidūṣaka says: there was a flaw in the performance. Gaṇadāsa thereupon asks Mālavikā to stay on until the point was decided—and the King gets the much-coveted opportunity of "drinking" the beauty of Mālavikā "with his eyes." The judge declares the performance absolutely flawless and superb : the Vidūṣaka points out that Gaṇadāsa had forgotten to offer worship to a Brahmin before the commencement of the performance. This remark of the Vidūṣaka sets everyone roaring with laughter and even Mālavikā *smiles*. The Vidūṣaka is foiled in his attempt to give a bracelet of the King by way of a present to Mālavikā for her good performance. The queen grows impatient, and Mālavikā retires behind the curtain. The wily Vidūṣaka turns to the King and says, " This much is my ability to serve you." Haradaṭṭa's demonstration is postponed to the morrow as it was already noon-time. (Act II).

An Interlude tells us how, ever since the contest, in which Gaṇadāsa was adjudged superior to his rival solely by reason of the superiority of his pupil, the King was ardently in love with Mālavikā, but refrained from exercising his authority in order to spare the feelings of the queen. Mālavikā, too, was languishing day by day "like a garland of *Mālātī* flowers which is cast away after its use." We are also informed that the Golden Aśoka tree—a favourite of the queen—had not put forth its blossoms even though Spring had set in and it required the satisfaction of its 'longing'—the longing was to be satisfied by a ceremonial kick to the trunk of the tree by a lovely woman well-decorated for the occasion.

The next scene presents the King in a love-sick condition, reflecting on the waywardness of love. He is in no mood to attend to his duties, and is wondering how he would pass the rest of the day when his friend Vidūṣaka reminds him that he had accepted the invitation of the junior queen Irāvati to keep her company in the swing-festival. The King is afraid lest his real condition should be found out—‘for, women are by nature clever’—but is prevailed upon by the Vidūṣaka to keep his promise. They both go to the pleasure-garden which was resplendent with vernal splendour. Suddenly the Vidūṣaka sights Mālavikā, ‘not quite sufficiently dressed and decorated’ and looking like one love-lorn, coming all alone towards them. The King is much relieved and feels exulted at her sight. The friends are wondering why Mālavikā is full of longing as she confesses aloud to herself that she is. Then arrives Bakulāvalikā, the friend of Mālavikā who had promised to do her best for the King in the matter of his love, carrying decorating materials. She commences the work of decorating Mālavikā’s feet with the red dye—and playing the go-between, she engages her friend in conversation which eventually draws out the profession of her love for the King. The King, who with his friend was overhearing this conversation, remarks, “Friend, this is enough for lovers. There is no charm for me in a union of lovers, one of whom is anxious and the other indifferent. Far more welcome were death when the lovers cherish equal love but have no hope of union with each other.” In the meanwhile, Irāvati has arrived on the scene accompanied by her maid-servant Nipunīkā and she is very much mortified to learn that Dhārinī had conferred the privilege of giving the ceremonial kick to the Aśoka on a mere maid-servant like Mālavikā. She is much exasperated by Bakulāvalikā’s effort to encourage Mālavikā in her love for the King, and is not at all suprised—‘Indeed, my heart told me so,’ she says—when the King and the Vidūṣaka approach Mālavikā and Bakulāvalikā. As the King gallantly requests Mālavikā to satisfy his longing, too, as she had just



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then satisfied that of the Aśoka, Irāvātī rushes up and interjects: 'Satisfy, do satisfy, indeed. This Aśoka will (only) put forth flowers; while this one (the King) will put forth flowers as well as fruits'. Everyone is taken aback by this sudden turn of events. The two girls excuse themselves by withdrawing from the place; and the King, seconded by his friend, is left to bear the wrath of Irāvātī who was thoroughly provoked. Both of them tried to explain—Irāvātī was in no mood to accept any explanation. She almost wishes to strike the King with her girdle but desists from doing so; and she goes away in high dudgeon, leaving the King lying prostrate on the ground in an attempt, gallant-wise, to conciliate his queen. (Act. III).

Next, the love-sick King is seen sending his door-keeper to enquire where queen Dhāriṇī was at the time as she had suffered a fall from the swing due to the 'rashness' of Gautama (Vidūṣaka). Just then the Vidūṣaka arrives, and the King impatiently asks him the news about Mālavikā, which he had gone to gather. The latter has a tale of woe to tell, for Irāvātī had reported the 'affair' between the King and Mālavikā to the eldest queen Dhāriṇī who at the former's request put Mālavikā and Bakulāvalikā in fetters and thrust them into an underground cellar; the custodian of the cellar was ordered not to set the prisoners free except on production of the queen's own ring bearing the image of a snake. The situation seems hopeless; but the Vidūṣaka hits upon a stratagem. The King goes to see the ailing queen who was then resting on a bed and was listening to some story from the Parivrājikā, and the Vidūṣaka says he would soon join the party after procuring flowers from the garden for presentation—as it was customary—to the queen. Soon he arrives in an agitated and frightened condition and informs the King, queen and party that while he was in the act of plucking a bunch of flowers he was bitten by a deadly cobra. First-aid was recommended, but, as the King said, it was a case

for Dhruvasiddhi, the toxicologist. The doctor is sent for but he sends a request that the patient be sent to him and, moreover, asks for an image of a snake which would be required in the ceremony of the *Water-pot* by which water was to be consecrated with charms for treating the Vidūṣaka. In the rush and confusion of the moment, the queen offers her ring—the Vidūṣaka, who had only feigned a snake-bite, directly goes to the under-ground cellar and effects the release of the two prisoners. Of course, news is brought to the royal party that the Vidūṣaka was cured; at the same time an urgent request to the King to attend to important state business comes from the minister. The King leaves the party and straightway goes to the pleasure-garden where the Vidūṣaka had taken Mālavikā and Bakulāvalikā. But he and the Vidūṣaka are seen by a maid-servant of Irāvati who, on being informed of the same, hurries up to the pleasure-garden, for she suspects something is in the offing again. The King and Mālavikā pledge their love to each other, when Irāvati goes up to the King and asks, "Whether the day-time appointment of the lovers had been successful"? The King and his friend leave the stage, as the young princess Vasulaxmī had been scared by the Pingala monkey of the King, the Vidūṣaka characteristically remarking, as he goes, 'Well done, O Pingala monkey, well hast thou rescued thy party from a troublesome situation!' Irāvati also goes away. As Mālavikā is wondering as to what might be in store for her now, it is announced that the Aśoka had burst into blossoms. Bakulāvalikā cheers up Mālavikā and assures her that Dhāriṇī would certainly keep her promise to grant the 'desire of her heart' to Mālavikā if her mission of satisfying the longing of the Aśoka turned out successful. (Act. IV).

In the Interlude prefixed to the last Act, we learn from the mouth of Madhukarikā, the garden-keeper, about the decoration of the Aśoka tree the event of whose blossoming was going to be celebrated by the queen. The garden-keeper



learns from Sārasaka, a servant of the queen, that ever since she heard that her son, Prince Vasumitra, was appointed by Puṣpamitra (Agnimitra's father) to guard the sacrificial horse, the queen has been offering daily donations to learned Brahmins for ensuring the safety of her son. Moreover, Sārasaka reveals the news of the defeat of the Vidarbha King by Agnimitra's army and the liberation of Mādhavasena. The Vidarbha King has sent an ambassador with a huge number of girls versed in arts and cart-loads of precious presents to Agnimitra. In the following scene, the King swayed by mingled feelings of joy and misery—joy at the victory of his army over the Vidarbha King and misery at the thought of the difficulties that lay in the path of his love—is buoyed up by the remark of his friend, the Vidūṣaka, that the queen might possibly satisfy his desire as she had that day asked the Parivrājikā to decorate Mālavikā in the Vidarbha fashion. Just then an invitation comes to the King from the queen asking him to keep her company while she celebrated the Blossoming of the Aśoka tree. The two friends leave for the garden and are greeted there by the queen who, as the Vidūṣaka quickly observes, allows Mālavikā to stay on—what an agreeable surprise!—even while the King arrives there. Mālavikā in her special decoration appears all the more charming. The sly Vidūṣaka remarks to his friend: "I say, my friend, now be calm and look at this ( इति ) one full of youth." The queen demands to know what he meant by the remark and the cunning 'minister of love' presently replies, "Your ladyship, (I refer only to) the beauty of the flowers of the Golden Aśoka tree!"

At this stage, two artist-girls, who owing to their indisposition could not be presented to the King earlier along with the rest of the presents from the Vidarbha King, are brought there—they recognise Mālavikā as the younger sister of their master Mādhavasena. They narrate how when Mādhavasena fell into the hands of his cousin, his minister, Sumati, fled away along with the younger princess. The narrative is then taken

up by Parivrājikā who is revealed as the widowed sister of Sumati: she describes how Sumati along with herself and the young princess joined a caravan bound for Vidiśā, how the caravan was attacked on the way by robbers, how Sumati was killed in action and how the princess fell into the hands of the robbers from whom she was wrested by Virasena who sent her to the queen as a suitable maid-servant. She explains her own silence until that moment about the identity of princess Mālavikā. She saw that the prophecy of a saint that Mālavikā will have to act as a servant for the period of a year after which she will find a worthy consort was materializing at the court of Agnimitra and so held her tongue. In the meantime, the King and the ministers unanimously order the partition of the Vidarbha country one-half of which was handed over to Mādhavaśena, Mālavikā's brother. Just then a letter arrives from Puṣpamitra detailing the exploits of Vasumitra against the Yavanas who tried to snatch the horse, and inviting Agnimitra and the queens to attend the ceremonies of the successful *Aśvamedha* sacrifice. The queen is all joy at the story of her son's brave deeds. And, fortified by the approval of Irāvati, Dhāriṇī, taking Mālavikā by the hand, says to the King, "Let my lord accept this present, befitting the receipt of welcome news". She then puts a veil on Mālavikā and formally hands her over to the King. Irāvati, too, sends a message of conciliation to the King and the drama ends.

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Unlike the *Vikramorvaśīya* and the *Śākuntala*, the *Mālavikāgnimitra* is simply and solely a drama. Though the very first dramatic composition of Kālidāsa, it is the composition of one who possessed the highest dramatic sense. That it is the very first of Kālidāsa's plays hardly requires any elaborate argument to prove. The Prologue shows the young dramatist apologetically asking to be excused for his obtrusion into the realm of the dramatic art which Bhāsa and Saumilla and Kaviputra held in demesne. This Prologue reveals a novice's



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modesty which is—naturally enough—absent in the prologues of the other two plays which came after Kālidāsa's fame as a dramatist was already established. Besides, the drama betrays the characteristic youthful enthusiasm to 'show off'—to parade what one knows. How else can we adequately account for the presence of the technicalities of dancing and acting and the entire dramatic art, or the definition of the ideal teacher or the pronouncement about the ideal of love in the drama? Again, the drama is lacking in depth of which we shall be speaking in the sequel. Finally, a possible indication that this was the first of Kālidāsa's dramas can be seen in the relatively unimportant place which Nature is assigned in it. Smarting as he did under the failure of his first attempt in the *Rtusamhāra* in which he dealt with Nature in relation to man, the poet turned to the drama and the human world and sought to reduce the importance of Nature to the minimum. Apart from the episode of the Blossoming of the Aśoka tree, Nature is utilized here merely as a back-ground—not very essential as such either—for the situations in the Garden Scenes. And even the central episode of the Aśoka tree, while it has the effect of changing the fortunes of the heroine, has none of that bearing on Mālavikā's—or any body else's, for the matter of that—character which Nature has on the love-lorn King Purūravas in the fourth Act of *Vik.* or on Śākuntalā, for instance, in the *Śāk.* While in the two later dramas, Nature is presented as intimately connected with man by revealing or moulding his character under her influence, in the *Mālavik.* her influence, what little of it is there, is only casual in this respect.

The quotations given at the head of this chapter show a remarkable agreement of views on the part of these two world-renowned dramatists on the nature, scope and purpose of the drama. The need of a plot which must be full of incidents arising from the varied actions of characters of different temperaments, who are swayed by their likes and dis-

likes and such other motives, in the back-ground of their circumstances—indeed, all the formal requirements of the drama can be deduced legitimately from either of the two quotations. The young Indian dramatist who conceived the drama as a representation of the actions of men arising from their different temperaments set about demonstrating the same by dramatising the love-affair of a historical King who lived not very long before him. For, as history tells us, Agnimitra was the son of Puṣpamitra, the commander-in-chief of Br̥hadratha, a Mauryan King. Puṣpamitra assassinated his master, usurped his kingdom and founded the Śunga dynasty about 183 B.C. He defeated the Ionian Greeks and performed the *Aśvamedha* sacrifice—both of which facts have been utilized by Kālidāsa in the drama.

The love between King Agnimitra and Mālavikā is the central idea of the play and towards its fulfilment all the situations and incidents converge. How passionately Kālidāsa desired to achieve singleness of purpose can be seen from the fact that all the characters in the play, otherwise so widely different from each other in outlook and temperament, are portrayed in profile, as it were, *i.e.*, they are portrayed only in relation to the central idea of the love-affair instead of as human complexes that they should be. Mālavikā, the heroine, for instance, utters not one word about her brother's misfortunes or her own unhappy past. Even the military expedition against the Vidarbha King which Agnimitra orders and which terminates successfully testifies on the one hand to the regal aspect of the hero's personality and on the other to the power and resources of the King who could therefore well afford to indulge in such amorous pursuits. Of course, the different characters react differently to the love-affair between Mālavikā and Agnimitra; and thereby conflict on which the drama ever depends is amply provided for by the dramatist. The conflict is mostly external—arising from unfavourable circumstances and from the opposition of other characters. The



elderly queen Dhārīṇī, on becoming suspicious of her lord's leanings towards Mālavikā, is ever on the alert and attempts to nip his amorousness for Mālavikā in the bud by keeping the latter away from his eyes. Issues are joined by the Vidūṣaka, the friend of the King, a battle of wits follows in which the Vidūṣaka by clever *manoeuvres* triumphs, and Mālavikā is brought on the stage before the eyes of the King. The conflict thus initiated is greatly deepened by the introduction of Irāvati, the junior queen whose jealousy and exasperation at this love-affair naturally know no bounds. Irāvati is obstacle personified, as it were, for she is never on the stage but acts as a brake on the smooth progress of the King's love. Thus by eliminating all other aspects of the personalities of the characters and concentrating on their attitude and reaction to the central theme, Kālidāsa has succeeded in 'unifying' the atmosphere with a view to achieving unity of purpose.

Equally ingeniously he has conceived the various situations in the plot. The plot is replete with situations and incidents, but all of them directly or indirectly have a vital bearing on the main issue. The quarrel between the two dance-teachers is engineered by the Vidūṣaka for the expressed purpose of enabling the King to have a view of the person of Mālavikā. The demonstration of dancing is only a sequel to this move of the King's friend. The fall of queen Dhārīṇī from the swing serves to smoothen the course of the royal love. The encounter with Irāvati and her unavailing efforts to dam the tide of the King's love only serve to heighten it. The snake-bite incident is a cunning piece of stratagem at the end of which Irāvati finds herself mortified and baffled. The Vidarbha expedition leads to the release of Mālavikā's brother from imprisonment and his installation as king of a moiety of the Vidarbha country. The brother who had already intended to offer his younger sister to Agnimitra in marriage will now find an additional urge to do so out of a sense of obligation to the King. And Vasumitra's victory over the Yavanas is the last straw to break

the back of the queen's disinclination to concede her promise to Mālavikā to fulfil the "wishes of thy heart." Thus all incidents in the drama gravitate round the central issue of the King's love; and though the compass is small and lacking in depth, yet the plot gains considerably in the strength of its texture.

The dramatic art of Kālidāsa, however, is seen at its best in the economy in plot-construction. Let us, for instance, consider the dramatic value of the remarks of the Vidūṣaka on the termination of Mālavikā's demonstration in Act II. Mālavikā is just leaving the stage when the Vidūṣaka observes: "Good lady, stay a while. A certain item has been overlooked by you. I should like to enquire about it." When called upon to point out the omission, the Vidūṣaka dodges a direct reply by saying that it was for the judge—the Parivrājikā—to adjudge the whole demonstration. The Parivrājikā gives her judgment and declares the demonstration to be absolutely faultless. Being then challenged once again to name the flaw, the Vidūṣaka blandly—or, shall we say, roguishly—replies, "At the first exhibition of tuitions, a Brahmin ought to have been worshipped; that, surely, you have forgotten to do!" The way in which this situation is conceived and executed at once reveals Kālidāsa as a dramatist of the first water. For, the remarks of the Vidūṣaka, for one thing, serve to rekindle the interest and expectancy which were naturally flagging in the Act at the end of Mālavikā's dancing. Secondly, and this was the main purpose of the Vidūṣaka as he himself confesses to his friend later on, the continued presence of Mālavikā on the stage which was necessitated by these remarks, afforded a golden opportunity to the King 'to drink the honey of his eyes', thus leading to the intensification of his love for Mālavikā. Thirdly, this device has made it possible for the judgment of the demonstration to be delivered, which would otherwise have been impossible without sacrificing the dramatic interest. And lastly, the delay thus caused helps to justify the



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postponement of Haradatta's demonstration to the morrow for it was already late in the morning. This apparently harmless intervention on the part of the Vidūṣaka is able to kill more than two birds at a stone from the dramatic point of view. And the beauty of its conception bursts into a rocket-like brilliance when, after the tense expectancy and seriousness which his remarks have created, the Vidūṣaka explains that the demonstration was defective because a Brahmin was not worshipped! How typically Vidūṣaka-like?

Kālidāsa has been careful enough not to allow any thread of the plot to hang loosely about. Every little detail has its purpose in the scheme of things in the drama. The snake-ring which appears to be so casually mentioned in the first Act is destined to play a very vital part in the *denouement* of the drama as we find in the fourth Act. The expedition against the Vidarbha King brings about the release of Mālavikā's brother and paves the way for his willing approval of his sister's marriage with Agnimitra. The happy news of Vasumitra's successful mission of guarding the sacrificial horse fills the mother's heart with utmost delight and the queen is all too ready to offer Mālavikā to her own husband who, as she well knew, was pining for her. Vasulaxmī, the child princess, is mentioned once early in the drama but she it is who becomes unconsciously instrumental in liberating the King and his friend from a very difficult situation, later on. All situations are thus sufficiently motivated. But the Pingala-monkey episode in the fourth Act is an exception; it is certainly a *deus ex machina* device used for finding a way out of a tight situation.

Thus the *Mālavikāgnimitra* is a drama of action. Of description, high flights of imagination, poetical outpourings—in a word, of 'poetry' there is very little. The beautiful descriptions of Mālavikā's personal charms or the classic Aśoka-scene or the highly 'poetical' complaint of the King that Mālavikā could hardly be relied upon, for 'in dreams' she having

stood before my eyes suddenly disappears; though locked in my arms, she suddenly slips away. Tell me how can my heart, tortured by pangs of love by her illusory union, place any trust in her?" (4.11)—these are indeed the redeeming elements in a drama of an otherwise humdrum character. What this drama loses in poetry it gains in its stageworthiness.

The characters in the drama are drawn from ordinary life and delineated as ordinary human beings. Agnimitra, a much-married King, is still a lover who, however, in the ardour of his new love, is not prepared to offend his queens in any manner. In fact, he is gallant enough to prostrate himself at the feet of his queen when the latter is all sound and fury at his 'treacherous' behaviour. Kālidāsa has endowed him with just the minimum of regality by showing his spirit and sense of dignity when he orders the military expedition against the Vidarbha King. His political acumen is revealed by the way in which he arranges for the administration of that newly conquered country. As a lover, however, he shows no initiative; he is abjectly dependent upon his friend, the Vidūṣaka. The Vidūṣaka is, in fact, the soul of the drama. Intelligent, shrewd, resourceful, loyal, ready-witted and withal-buoyant and light-hearted, he carries the entire plot of the drama on his broad shoulders. There is no significant situation in the drama in which this 'minister of love' of the King is not concerned. His humorous quips and witty sallies cover a seriousness of purpose behind them. The conventional traits of a Vidūṣaka—*e.g.*, his deformed appearance, gluttonous appetite, blockheadedness, etc.,—are shown to be present in him but they appear only as concessions to convention. Dhārīṇī, the elderly queen, does her best to prevent an 'affair' growing up between her lord and Mālavikā; but once she finds that the King has set his heart upon the latter she, in keeping with her years and ideals of an Aryan wife, shows the magnanimity of her heart by ignoring the 'affair' altogether and ultimately even handing Mālavikā



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over to the King by her own hands. Her simplicity is matched by her desire to please her lord. We feel a pang of sympathy for her when the artful Vidūṣaka makes her part with her ring by fraudulent means. Irāvati, the younger queen, finds Mālavikā treading on her corns and reacts violently. In sheer self-defence she tries to intervene, but her impulsive and irascible temperament recoils upon her own head when she becomes unsuccessful. In the height of provocation she is about to strike the King with her girdle; and even when the latter falls at her feet, seeking reconciliation, she walks away in a temper. At the end of the drama she has not altogether shed her displeasure, for she does not join in the celebration of Mālavikā's marriage to the King but only sends a message of congratulations. Mālavikā, a child of fortune, subjected to vicissitudes of life even while she was only in her teens, is all tenderness. Blessed with intellectual and artistic gifts in addition to exquisite bodily grace, she soon finds herself in love with the King whose ardour for her love was no less. She, however, is a creature of circumstances and knows not what to do. How tender is her speech in the third Act when for the first time she reveals her own feelings from her own mouth! Indeed, Kālidāsa at once reveals himself here as a past master in analysing and delineating the emotions of a young girl which ultimately found their consummate expression in *Śāk*. She is ever in the dread of the queen, but is encouraged and assisted in her love by Bakulāvalikā, a bold and clever friend who braves many a storm in behalf of Mālavikā. Another interesting character is the Parivrājikā who, interested as she is in Mālavikā's fortunes, takes a hand in furthering the love-affair. She is called the 'learned Kauśikī,' and justifiably so, for she is a competent judge of art, has a fund of interesting stories and legends to narrate and displays her knowledge of medicine by suggesting various first-aid antidotes for snake-bite. Widowed early in life, she has now taken to the holy order; but the part which she plays in the drama hardly seems to square well with her robe, though, it must

be admitted, nuns in later classical drama and prose have more or less only followed in her footsteps in this respect. Nipunikā and the two dancing-teachers are other minor characters which are cleverly, though briefly, portrayed.

The dialogues and speeches are well manipulated. They are able to sustain interest and never flag. Indeed, the handling of dialogues in the bi-focal and tri-focal scenes—the latter in the third Act—is cleverly done and is a tribute to Kālidāsa's dramatic art. Brilliant repartees, racy humour, occasional puns, apt allusions or metaphors—these lend flavour to the various speeches. An outstanding specimen of clever distribution of speeches and the revelation of character thereby is provided by the scene in the first Act when the Vidūṣaka eventually comes out successful in getting the decision that the demonstration of dancing should take place.

Full of interest as it is, the *Mālavikāgnimitra* has no depth—of emotion, of characterization. The characters are mostly static. The plot is rather superficial and the situations are not related to characters. The drama is one of court-intrigue. It does not deal with larger problems of life or with psychological analysis or trying situations which show the characters in section. It is a drama of the world, worldly. Love is indeed a fundamental emotion: but its treatment in the drama, artistic as it is, is only superficial. The dramatist gave an enunciation of love in the drama, but he could not fully demonstrate it in his execution. Perhaps, he took लोकचरितदर्शन (presentation of the actions of men) as the purpose of the drama rather too literally, and instead of dealing with human traits which are the mainsprings of actions, he dealt with human actions—a draw-back which he soon realized and corrected—in the other two dramas.

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## (II) VIKRAMORVAŚĪYA

To any one who undertakes the study of the progressive development of Kālidāsa's mind and art and the attempts of his aesthetic sense to find expression for itself, nothing would appear more interesting and significant than the fact that all his compositions, dramatic or otherwise, subsequent to the *Mālavikāgnimitra* deal with legendary or mythological material. In the *Mālavikā*, he drew upon history; but possibly he found the facts of history rather cramping and offering little berth for the free play of his imagination. Kālidāsa was at least as much of a poet as a dramatist. And so he naturally turned for inspiration to the inexhaustible treasure-houses of romance and heroic mythology—the *Rāmāyaṇa* the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas*. Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā, Purūravas and Urvaśī, Daśaratha, Rāma and other illustrious descendants of the solar race, the semi-divine inhabitants of Kubera's capital and, above all, the eternal divine pair of Śiva and Pārvatī—these are the divine and quasi-divine characters that people Kālidāsa's world.

The *Vikramorvaśīya* contains the story of the love of King Purūravas and the celestial nymph Urvaśī. The story of the love of this pair is as old as the hills, so to say. For its earliest mention is to be found in the *R̥gveda*, (X.95), though its details are not exactly ascertained. That hymn of the *R̥gveda* is in the form of a dialogue between Purūravas and Urvaśī. The King makes advances to the celestial damsel, asks her why she foresook him and implores her to return. Urvaśī, however, reminds him that 'friendship with women there can never be,' that she had stayed with him for four years but now she was no longer minded to return. The obscurity of the contents of this hymn is sought to be lighted up by a passage in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (5.1-2) which narrates the story circumstantially as follows:—

Urvaśī the heavenly nymph became enamoured of Purū-

ravas, the son of Ilā, and lived in his company on condition, among others, that he should not appear disrobed before her. She became *enciente*. In the meanwhile the Gandharvas felt that Urvaśī had lived among mortals long enough and she should be brought back somehow. Now, Urvaśī had a pair of pet rams kept in her bed-chamber. The Gandharvas took them away one by one. Urvaśī lamented this loss and taunted the King, who thereupon sprang to his feet even while he was unclad and ran after the Gandharvas for the rescue of the rams. The Gandharvas in the meantime created a flash of lightning which revealed the naked figure of the King to Urvaśī's eyes—and she went away. The King, then, very much distressed at her disappearance, wandered about and saw her sporting in the company of other nymphs in a lake near Kurukṣetra. It is here that the conversation contained in the Ṛgvedic hymn takes place.

The story is also narrated, in the same context of the Ṛgvedic hymn, in the *Bṛhaddevatā*. Later on, it assumes different forms in the Purāṇas which attempt to fill up the gaps and present a consistent narrative. It is found in the *Viṣṇu*, *Padma*, and *Matsya Purāṇas* as well as in the *Harivamśa* section of the *Mahābhārata* (besides a bare reference in the *Ādi Parvan*), in the *Bhāgavata* and the *Bṛhatkathā* of Guṇāḍhya. The versions in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, the *Bhāgavata*, etc., are mainly based on the Vedic account, while that in the *Bṛhatkathā* contains details which are interesting for a comparison with the plot of Kālidāsa's drama. It is the account in the *Matsyapurāṇa*, however, which comes the closest to Kālidāsa's version. This is how it runs in the words of Wilson :—"Budha was the son of the royal Soma by Tārā. His father conferred upon him the dominion of the earth and inaugurated him supreme over the world. The holy Budha begot by Ilā a son who performed by his own might a hundred *Aśvamedhas*. He was named Purūravas, and was revered by all worlds. He worshipped Viṣṇu on the peaks of Himālaya, and thence became the



monarch of the sevenfold earth. Keśi and myriads of *Daityas* fell before his prowess, and Urvaśī, fascinated by his personal graces, became his bride.

“*Virtue*, *Wealth* and *Desire* once paid this monarch a visit, curious to ascertain which of them held the first place in his esteem. The King received them with respect, but paid to *Virtue* his profoundest homage. *Wealth* and *Desire* were offended by the preference shown to their companion. *Wealth* denounced a curse upon him, that Avarice should occasion his fall; and *Desire* declared that he should be separated from his bride, and on that account suffer distraction in the forest of Kumāra on the Gandhamādana mountain; but *Virtue* declared he should enjoy a long and pious life, that his descendants should continue to multiply as long as the sun and moon endured, and should ever enjoy the dominion of the earth. After this the divinities disappeared.

“Purūravas was in the habit of paying a visit to Indra every day. Having ascended his car, accompanying the sun in his southern course, he beheld on one occasion the demon Keśi seize and carry off the nymphs Citralekhā and Urvaśī. The King attacked the demon, and destroyed him with the shaft of Vāyu, by which he not only rescued the nymphs, but established Indra on his throne, which the demon had endangered. For this service Indra repaid the monarch with his friendship, and gave him additional power, splendour and glory.

“Having invited the King to a festival, at which was represented the celebrated story of *Lakshmī*’s election of a husband, the invention of Bharata, Indra commanded Menakā, Rambhā and Urvaśī to perform their respective parts. Urvaśī, who represented *Lakshmī*, being engrossed by admiration of the King, forgot what she had to enact, and thereby incurred the high displeasure of the sage, who sentenced her to separation from the prince on earth, and condemned her to pine fifty-five years transformed to a vine, until restored to the

regrets of Purūravas. Urvaśī, having made the King her lord, resided with him, and after the term of the curse had expired, bore him eight sons: Āyus, Dhritāyu, Aśvāyu, Dhanāyu, Dhritiman, Vasu, Divijāta, and Śatāyu, all endowed with more than human power."

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Now, let us see the contents of Kālidāsa's drama. The first Act opens dramatically with the scene laid in mid-air and a bevy of celestial nymphs crying piteously for help. King Purūravas who was returning after paying his respects to the Sun arrives on the scene, and on being informed by the nymphs that Urvaśī, 'the ornament of heaven', and her friend Citralekhā were carried away by the demon Keśi, he rushes in his chariot after the demon for the rescue of the two nymphs. The heavenly damsels are anxiously awaiting the outcome of the King's intervention; they are delighted to see the 'deer-bannered' chariot of the King in the distance—for 'he would never return without attaining his object in view.' In the chariot Urvaśī, terribly frightened, has fallen into a swoon, and Citralekhā and the King make attempts to console and reassure her. As soon as she revives and hears from Citralekhā that the cursed demons were vanquished, she eagerly enquires,—“by the great Indra who can see everything by his supernatural powers?” Citralekhā replies, “Not by the great Indra; but by this sage-like King Purūravas whose majesty is as great as Indra's.” At which Urvaśī looks at the King—and observes to herself, “I am indeed obliged by the demons!” The King, too, on his part, is fascinated by the heavenly beauty of Urvaśī. When Urvaśī and Citralekhā enquire about their friends, he makes the significant reply: “They are all deeply dejected. And you can understand it. For, even that person whose blessed eyes have even once seen you perchance, O beautiful lady—even he will feel anxious in your absence. What, then, to say about your friends full



of ardent love for you ? ” (1.9). As the chariot descends from the sky on to the peak of the Hemakūṭa mountain, it jolts and the shoulder of the King jostles against that of Urvaśī. Urvaśī and Citralekhā then rejoin their friends. At that moment Citraratha, the Gandharva King, whom Indra has sent for the rescue of the two nymphs from the demon, arrives and congratulates the King on his victory over Keśi. He invites Purūravas to go to heaven and personally hand over Urvaśī to Indra whom he had laid under a debt of obligation by this adventure. The King, however, replies, “ It is indeed due to the power of Indra that his partisans score victories over their enemies. The echo of the roar of a lion reverberating from the hollows of a mountain is able to frighten the elephants,” and pleads his inability to see Indra at the moment. Then Citraratha starts to leave along with the celestial damsels, but Urvaśī is obstructed in her flight upwards by her necklace getting entangled in a creeper. She turns her face back, eyes the King and calls on Citralekhā for disentangling the necklace. The latter smilingly remarks, ‘ It is firmly entangled, indeed. It appears difficult to disentangle. Well, let me try.’ In the meantime, the missile presided over by the Wind-god which the King had sent against the demons returns to his quiver. The King, too, then gets into his chariot and, looking in the direction of Urvaśī’s departure, exclaims, ‘ O love which hankers after inaccessible objects ! ’ (Act I).

In the Interlude, the Vidūṣaka, who is waiting for his friend, the King, to finish his state business, is bursting with the secret of the love-affair which the King has confided to him; and he confesses to having to make Herculean efforts to resist giving it out to any one. There arrives Nipunikā, a maid-servant of queen Auśīnarī, who intends to angle out from the Vidūṣaka the reason why His Majesty was uneasy ever since his return from the visit to the sun. Having reminded the Vidūṣaka of his keen interest in the fortunes of the queen, Nipunikā cunningly adds that the queen had the misfortune

to be addressed by the King by the name of his beloved who has captured his heart. Upon this, the Vidūṣaka, reflecting that the King had thus given out the secret himself, asks whether she was addressed as Urvaśī? And he sends word to the queen that he 'will do my best to turn my friend from the pursuit of that mirage.'

In the main scene the love-smitten King appears in the company of the Vidūṣaka. He enquires of the Vidūṣaka whether he was still keeping the secret! While he is wondering where to pass the time, his friend suggests that they could well go to the kitchen and feast their eyes on the materials and preparations of good dishes to be seen there! The King thinks that they should resort to the solitude of the Pramada garden for alleviating his pangs. On going there, however, he finds the sight of the mango-sprout too exciting for his love-stricken heart. The Garden bears the charms of the advent of the vernal season. Thus distracted, the King asks the Vidūṣaka—a Brahmin and an affectionate friend—to find out some means of satisfying his yearning. The latter takes the request literally and says he is trying to think out by means of mental concentration which the King should not disturb by his lamentations.

The scene then becomes virtually bi-focal with the entry of Urvaśī and Citralekhā in the pathway of the sky. Urged on by love Urvaśī, putting aside all feminine decorum, goes out to meet her lover. They arrive at the palace of the King and find him in the garden in the company of his friend. Urvaśī desires to overhear the conversation of the two friends, and so the two nymphs descend on the earth and approach the King, keeping themselves invisible by the magic charm *Tīraskarīṇī*. Now, the Vidūṣaka announces that he has discovered a remedy for his friend's distress and it is that he should either enjoy Urvaśī's company in dream or draw a portrait of her and gaze at it! Dismissing both these ways as impracticable, the King sorrowfully observes, 'She (Urvaśī) does not realize



my mental tortures which are so painful. Or, possibly, having known my love for her by means of her supernatural powers, she still ignores me.' Stung by this reproach, Urvaśī indites the following message on a *birch-leaf*: "O lord, if I who am not known by you am really what you believe me to be with reference to you who are so ardently attached to me, how is it then that even the breezes of the celestial (Nandana) garden blow hot on my tender body on a bed strewn with Pārijāta flowers which are crushed (by my restless rolling about)?" She lets this message-leaf fall before the King who is overjoyed to read of this requital of his love by Urvaśī and hands this precious autograph of his beloved over to the Vidūṣaka for safe keeping. Preceded by Citralekhā, Urvaśī then reveals herself to the King, and hardly are the formal greetings between the lovers over when a heavenly messenger announces: "O Citralekhā, bring Urvaśī quickly, for, the lord of Gods wishes in the company of the guardians of the worlds to witness the dramatic performance with its graceful acting, which based on eight sentiments has been taught to you by the sage Bhārata." With a grieving heart, Urvaśī and Citralekhā depart.

In the meantime the Vidūṣaka had carelessly dropped the tell-tale birch-leaf; it is carried on by the wind and is picked up by Nipunīkā who reveals its contents to her mistress, the queen. The queen is highly exasperated and says, 'I am going to visit that hankerer—after—the—nymph with this very leaf as a present.' The King has become wroth with the Vidūṣaka for his carelessness; and while they are both searching about for it, the queen arrives and confronts the King with the leaf. The King tries to explain, but the queen, full of rage, starts to leave the place. The King falls at her feet for reconciliation; but, steeling her heart against all such attempts of her lord, she walks away. When the Vidūṣaka suggests that it was well that the queen went away in a rage, the King demurs and says that although his heart is set on Urvaśī, he has a great regard for the queen. (Art II).

Next, from the conversation of two pupils of Bharata, we learn that at the performance of *Lakshmī-svayamvara* (Lakṣmī's Bridal Election) which was composed by Sarasvatī (the Goddess of Learning), the celestial audience enjoyed the different sentiments with rapt attention. But Urvaśī made a slip in her speech. When Menakā playing the part of Vārūṇī asked Urvaśī who acted in the role of Lakṣmī, 'Friend, here are assembled these distinguished persons from the three worlds and the Guardians of the worlds together with Keśava. To which one of them does your heart feel attached?' she ought to have replied,—'to Puruṣottama'; but, instead, the words—'to Purūravas' escaped her lips. The sage Bharata became angry with her and cursed her that she would not retain her celestial position since she had deviated from his instruction. But Indra softened the rigour of the curse, saying, 'Let me do something agreeable in this matter to that sage-King, my ally in battles. You may wait upon Purūravas at your will until he sees a child born of you.' Here ends the Interlude pre-fixed to the third Act.

It is evening time. The chamberlain sees the King, his evening prayers over, coming along surrounded by lighted torches carried by maid-servants. He informs the King that the queen requests his presence at the *Maṇi Harmya* palace while she worships the Moon. The King and the Vidūṣaka both surmise that the queen was observing the vow probably, as an atonement for her discourtesy to the King. They both then go to the appointed place. In the privacy of the place where the queen has not yet arrived, the King speaks about his pangs of love—'love, denied the bliss of union, increases a hundred-fold'—and sustains himself on hope as his right arm throbs at the moment.

Then arrive the two celestial nymphs in the path-way of the sky—Urvaśī dressed like an *Abhisārikā* (a love-smitten 'lass' who goes to the *rendezvous* to meet her paramour) in black silken garments and wearing scanty ornaments. Urvaśī



asks her friend how she looks in her present dress. Citralekhā replies, 'I have no words to describe you. I feel, however, would that I were Purūravas'! They descend on the spot where the King and the Vidūṣaka have been waiting for the queen and once again Urvaśī is curious to eavesdrop her lover's effusions. The King gives expression to his unbearable plight due to separation from Urvaśī; and the latter, having overheard these protestations of love, hastens into his presence still concealed by the *Tiraskariṇī* charm. Before, however, she realizes this, the arrival of the queen is announced. The King and the Vidūṣaka stand 'to attention', and the two celestial nymphs remain there invisible to mortal eyes. The queen arrives—'clad in white silk, with only the auspicious ornaments put on, her locks of hair decorated with the sprouts of holy *Dūrvā*, and looking appeased towards me (the King) by her very appearance which has shed all pride under the pretext of the vow.' Urvaśī, too, is struck by the majesty of her form and feels uneasy at the great regard paid to her by the King. Citralekhā, however, banishes her fears by observing that accomplished lovers whose hearts are transferred to some other women become lavish in their courtesies. The queen then reveals that she is observing the 'vow of reconciling the husband' and offers worship to the moon-rays. The moon-worship being over, she worships the King and, keeping the Moon joined with Rohiṇī as witness, takes the vow, "From now onwards I shall behave affectionately with any woman whom my lord loves or who yearns for his union." The King tries to act gallant-wise, denying all innuendoes about his love-affair, but the queen departs now that the observance of the vow was over. Soon the thoughts of the King turn to Urvaśī and he wishes,

गूढा नूपुरशब्दमात्रमपि मे कान्ता श्रुतो पातये-  
 त्पश्चादेत्य शनैः कराम्बुजवृत्ते कुर्वीत वा लोचने ।  
 हर्म्येऽस्मिन्नवतीर्य साध्वसवशान्मन्दायमाना बला-  
 दानीयेत पदात्पदं चतुरया सख्या ममोपान्तिकम् ॥ —3.15

(Would that that beloved of mine, remaining concealed, at least enables my ears to hear the tinkling of her anklets? Or, would that she, quietly approaching from behind, closes my eyes with her lotus-like hands? Or would that she, who having descended upon this my palace hesitates through embarrassment, is forcibly brought step by step by her clever friend into my presence.) Urvaśī approaches from behind and closes the King's eyes—and the lovers meet. Citralekhā asks the King to take care of her friend, for she herself was to be away from them for waiting upon the sun during summer, and leaves. Both the lovers feel exultant at their happy time. The Act closes upon the pair retiring from the terrace into their chamber, as it was already late in the night. (Act III).

In the Interlude, Citralekhā appears dejected; her companion Sahajanyā asks her the reason about her anxiety. Citralekhā explains that she tried to get the news about Urvaśī by means of yogic concentration and was dismayed to know that on one occasion Urvaśī went on a pleasure-trip to the Gandhamādana-forest in the company of her lover, the King. There the King happened to fix his eyes on Udayavati, a Vidyādhara girl who was playing with sand-hills in the sandy bed of the celestial Ganges; this enraged Urvaśī who spurned all attempts at reconciliation on the part of the King, and, having forgotten about the restriction of the god Kārtikeya on account of her mind having been stupefied by the curse of the preceptor, entered the forest, sacred to Kumāra, which should be avoided by women. No sooner did she enter it than she was turned into a creeper. The King is ever since roaming about day and night searching his beloved in the forest. His distress would only be aggravated by the rise of the rain-clouds which make even happy couples restless. Sahajanyā hopes that some means of re-union is bound to be found for such distinguished persons cannot suffer for long.

The main scene presents the King dressed as a mad man. He bawls out :—"Thou cursed devil, stop, stop there. Where



dost thou run away with my beloved? Aha ! He has leapt into the sky from the top of the mountain and now showers me with arrows !” Marking closely, he realizes and says, “This is (only) a fresh cloud fully equipped and not an over-bearing demon ; this is (only) the rain-bow and, indeed, not a high-strung bow ; and this, too, is a smart shower of rain and not a volley of arrows ; and this one glossy-like a streak on the whet-stone is only lightning and not my beloved *Urvaśī*.” He feels the pangs of separation poignantly on account of the rains ; so ‘possibly he, a King could command the rainy-season to clear out, for is not ‘the King the cause of Time’? He moves on, and on seeing the fresh *Kandalī* plant with its crimson-streaked blossoms, is reminded of the eyes of his beloved with tears rising in them through anger. A peacock enjoying the breeze and gazing delightedly at the clouds is sighted by him. Of him he enquires whether he has seen his beloved? Next, he sees a cuckoo. “Among birds this species is the cleverest. I shall enquire of her:—

त्वां कामिनो मदनदूतिमुदाहरन्ति  
मानावभङ्गनिपुणं त्वममोचमस्त्रम् ।  
तामानय प्रियतमां मम वा समीपं  
मां वा नयाशु कलभाषिणि यत्र कान्ता ॥ —4

(O cuckoo, lovers call thee the emissary of love. Thou art a never-failing missile, clever at breaking the anger of love. Either fetch that beloved of mine here to me or, O Sweet-coo, take me where my sweet-heart is.) What didst thou say— ‘Why did she leave you, so intensely attached as you are?’ Just listen : ‘She became angry ; but I can recall not a single cause for her anger which I might have given her. The sway which women hold over their lovers brooks no lapse in love.’ What, having cut short our conversation, she (the cuckoo) attends to her own affairs ! It is well observed that the distress of others, ever so great, is hardly felt—yet I can’t feel angry with her for the reason that she is as sweet of voice as my beloved.” He is cheered by what he believes to be the

tinkling sound of the anklets of his beloved but what turns out to be the cackling of swans in a pond. He addresses a swan—‘If that lady with arched eye-brows has not been seen by you, O swan, on the bank of the lake, where did you get, tell me, you thief, all this her gait with steps graceful through intoxication?’ With a laugh he adds, “So the swan has flown away, thinking that here is the King who punished thieves!” He roams about and questions a *Cakravāka* bird, a bee that was settled on a lotus-flower, an elephant accompanied by his mate whether they knew about Urvaśī’s whereabouts. Then he comes to a mountain which is the favourite haunt of celestial damsels. He approaches the mountain and asks,

सर्वक्षितिभृतां नाथ दृष्ट्वा सर्वाङ्गसुन्दरी ।

रामा रम्ये वनोद्देशे मया विरहिता त्वया ॥ —4.27

(O lord of all mountains, have you seen in the charming forest-regions that lovely lady of beautiful limbs separated from me?) The mountain caves echo the same words and the King understands the reply to be: “O lord of all Kings, I have seen in the charming forest-regions that lovely lady of beautiful limbs—separated from you.” But he is soon disillusioned, for all his words are repeated in the same manner—‘Alas, this is only the echo of my own words proceeding from the caves.’ He comes to a river and wonders whether his beloved has undergone that transformation. Wandering further about, he sees a red gem shooting forth its lustre in between the broken stones. A heavenly voice asks him to pick it up for ‘worn on the body, it soon brings about union with the beloved person.’ Then on seeing a creeper, devoid of flowers though it is, he feels delighted, and in the ecstasy of the belief that the creeper is none other than his beloved, he embraces it—and lo! the creeper is transformed into Urvaśī! Urvaśī then apologizes to the King for her cruelty and explains how she came to undergo that transformation and how it was due to the jewel that she regained her original form. The pair then set out for the King’s capital. (Act IV).



The last Act opens with the Vidūṣaka who reveals that the King, after his return with Urvaśī from his pleasure-trip in celestial gardens, was happily settled and was fondly loved by the subjects. Only he had no offspring. To-day, continues the Vidūṣaka, the King and the queens have been visiting the holy confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna. Suddenly, it is announced behind the curtain that the 'Sangamānīya Jewel' was carried off by a vulture. Before the King could get his bow and arrows, the bird, which was flying round in the sky with the necklace in which the jewel was set hanging down, passed out of sight. Soon, the jewel and an arrow are brought to the King. The King is mightily pleased with the recovery of the jewel, and as he reads the name on the arrow with curiosity, he is nettled to find that it belonged to 'Prince Āyus, the son of Purūravas and Urvaśī.' Urvaśī, he says, never showed any signs of pregnancy, and he was never separated from her except for the short duration of a sacrificial session in the Nimiṣa forest. The Vidūṣaka reminds him that she was a celestial person who could very well conceal her actions by means of spiritual power. At this stage, an old female ascetic brings a young boy to the King and presents him as the latter's son. She explains that ever since his birth this child was deposited by Urvaśī with her for some unknown reason. All his sacramental rites have been duly performed and his education has been well attended to by the sage Cyavana. That day, however, he acted against the rules of the hermitage by killing a bird with his arrow, and so the sage asked her to return the boy to Urvaśī. Urvaśī then arrives there, and the female ascetic retires after handing the boy over to her. The king then says he is as fortunate as Indra—at which Urvaśī suddenly bursts into tears and explains, "At first I had forgotten everything at the sight of the son. But now the mention of Indra reminds me of the stipulation and pains my heart." The stipulation was that Urvaśī should return to heaven as soon as Purūravas sees the face of a son born of her. She continues, "This son, as soon as

he was born, was deposited by me secretly through fear of separation from Your Majesty under the care of the revered Satyavatī in the hermitage of the sage Cyavana. Today he has been returned by her since he is grown up enough to serve his father. So my stay with Your Majesty now ends." All become gloomy, and the King proposes to entrust the kingdom to his youthful heir and retire into a forest. At that moment, the sage Nārada arrives with a message from Indra, who asks the King not to renounce his weapons in view of a war between the gods and the demons which was about to take place and adds that Urvaśī shall remain the King's lawfully wedded wife till the end of his life. The atmosphere becomes jubilant; and the ceremony of crowning Prince Āyus as Heir-Apparent is carried out by the sage Nārada. Urvaśī then takes her son for offering respects to 'the senior mother' viz. queen Auśīnarī. But before she goes, the usual concluding benedictory stanza is recited—and the drama ends. (Act V).

The change-over from a historical to a mythological theme will readily reveal itself even to a casual reader of the *Mālavikā* and the *Vikramorvaśīya*. Having before him a story dating back to antiquity and available in a not quite settled form, Kālidāsa felt himself free to deal with it as he would; and having decided upon giving it a dramatic mould, he trained his creative imagination to play upon it and bloom it into a 'thing of beauty'. The hero was a royal personage who had access to the celestial world and had many a successful battle with the demons to his credit. The heroine—Urvaśī—was a heavenly nymph. These facts have been fully taken advantage of by the poet's creative imagination; and consequently we have various details or situations of a supernatural character in the drama. In the drama we find the celestial nymphs roaming the skies between the human and super-human worlds. They are able to conceal themselves from mortal eyes by their supernatural powers. They possess the power to divine what they like by yogic concentration. Urvaśī can



create a birch-leaf at will. In keeping with this superhuman element, Kālidāsa has introduced the incident of Urvaśī being transformed into and back again from a creeper. The unearthly *Sangamaniya* Jewel is made responsible for the reunion of the separated lovers. And, Citraratha, the Gandharva King, the Wind-missile, the episode of Lakṣmī-Svayamvara in heaven, the mention of Indra and the great sages like Bharat, Cyavana, etc.,—these serve to accentuate the romantic character of the play.

Some of these supernatural elements endow the drama with great scenic beauty; and the poet has heightened it by introducing additional details of back-ground or circumstance. The very opening scene, as we have just noted, is laid in mid-air with the celestial nymphs crying for help; the King's chariot hurtles through the sky in pursuit of the demons; and finally the scene shifts to the romantic regions of the Hemakūṭa mountain. In the third Act, the King is shown to arrive with a multitude of lighted torches held by maid-servants around him—the beauty of this scene can well be imagined. Next come the moon-rise and the worship of the moon-rays by the queen. What a striking 'scenic' contrast is presented here by Urvaśī dressed in black silk like an *Abhisārikā* and the queen clad auspiciously in spotless white? The fourth Act is almost 'Hawaii-an' in the richness of its scenes of nature. The King roaming about in the celestial forest with cuckoos cooing, swans floating in ponds, peacocks with rich plumage perched on rocks, droning bees settling on full-blown lotuses, elephants stalking the wood in the company of their mates, and all this under the shadow of dark clouds bristling with occasional flashes of lightning and pouring down rain. Indeed, Kālidāsa has singularised this Act by making the King speak mostly in verse with a sprinkling of prose in between the different stanzas. Add to this the fact that, according to one version of the *Vikramorvaśīya*, this Act contains thirty-one Prakrit stanzas set to music and dance. If they are genuine,

then with the orchestral blending of such inspiring natural back-ground, enchanting music and attractive dance-sequence, Hillebrandt's observation that this Act may be looked upon more as an opera than a drama is amply justified.

The question of the genuineness of the thirty-one Prakrit stanzas commented upon by Ranganātha has been discussed by scholars; and the opinion generally held on it refuses to believe in their authenticity. S. P. Pandit showed that six out of the eight MSS. collated by him did not contain these verses. Secondly, they are not known to another commentator of the *Vik.*, viz., Kātyavema. Thirdly, the King even in his demented condition cannot be expected to speak in Prakrit. Fourthly, most of the stanzas only repeat what is contained in the Sanskrit stanzas and are therefore superfluous. And, finally, these verses are in *Apabhramśa*—a Prakrit which Kālidāsa has used nowhere else in his dramas. For these reasons it is believed that these stanzas are interpolations probably made in the North with a view to heighten the charms of the Act by the addition of Prakrit verses set to music and dance. On the other hand, it is argued that the verses should be looked upon as genuine because so many *Prakrit* stanzas could not have been interpolated into the Act which is wholly in Sanskrit. Interpolations are usually of a *similar* stuff and form. Besides, the verses are not spoken by the King: they are intended to serve as back-ground music and supply the necessary atmosphere to the different actions or movements of the King. The fourth Act, as we have already seen, is almost entirely in verse, and Kālidāsa might have enhanced its operatic beauty by means of these Prakrit verses. The argument of language is considered "conclusive" by Keith against the genuineness of the verses, because in Kālidāsa's time the *Apabhramśa* could not have reached the stage of development as found in these stanzas. In this connection, however, it has to be remembered that the language of MSS. often suffers at the hands of copyists who substitute forms



prevailing in their own time in place of the old ones. That Kālidāsa could have used the Apabhramśa is not impossible. We know that Daṇḍin says in his *Kāvyaadarśa* that in poetical compositions the Apabhramśa means the dialects of the Ābhīras, etc. Again, Dharasena eulogizes his father Guhasena in an Inscription as proficient in Sanskrit, Prakrit and Apabhramśa (संस्कृतप्राकृतपद्मभाषात्रय etc.,) The Inscription belongs to the sixth century, A.D. Therefore long before the sixth century the Apabhramśa must have attained to the dignity of a literary language. The Ābhīras are known to Patanjali (2nd century B. C.); and therefore it is not *impossible* that Kālidāsa might have availed himself of this Prakrit in this singularly musical Act. Yet, it is only fair to add that the question is still *sub judice*.

However, the interest in the drama depends, as it must ever do, mainly on the delineation of human character and sentiments. Indeed, it is only in human terms that non-human characters will, or can, interest us. The Vidūṣaka's words, 'O Good lady, what is there in heaven to be eager for? There is no eating, no drinking—only fish are imitated with unwinking eyes,' (Act 3) contain a truth far deeper than he could have imagined. Urvaśī, the heroine, is depicted as a human being, although her divine character is not eliminated. What a woman's heart she reveals in her love at first sight, her modesty and bashfulness when her shoulder contacts that of the King owing to the jolting of the chariot, her inability to take leave of the King herself, her significant look at the King when her necklace is entangled in the creeper! It is again a human heart in love which forces her to pay repeated visits to the loving King. Her anxiousness, her hesitation to use divine powers to find out who the sweetheart of the King is, her delight, her jealousy at the King's regard for his queen as much as her generous tribute to the latter's beauty and majesty, her anguish at the impending separation in the last Act—these are characteristically human feelings. Her

generosity of heart is revealed by her asking her son to offer his salutations to his elder mother. However, as the Vidūṣaka cautions us, we are not to 'expect out and out human qualities from the celestials.' The divine aspect of Urvaśī's character lends her a certain 'superiority' which interferes with our interest in her character. Despite the fact of her ardent love for Purūravas, the petulance she betrays in so easily deserting him because he gazed at a Vidyādhara girl is probably to be traced to the jealousy of the divine rather than the human strain in her character. So also the selfishness with which she could abandon her son as soon as he was born so that she might enjoy the company of her sweet-heart the longer is too unmotherly to be human.

Citrālekḥā is a direct, though remote, lineal descendant of Bakulāvalikā in *Mālavikā*. Like the latter she is ever ready to help her friend in her love-affair and is disposed occasionally to indulge in a light vein. She, however, does not appear after the third Act. Another female character is queen Auśinārī. When she gets to know of the love-affair of her husband, she behaves with him in much the same manner as Irāvātī in *Mālavikā*; but soon her conscience and fidelity to her lord gain the upper hand, and, like Dhārinī, she makes ample amends for her rude behaviour. There is something of the tragically beautiful in her taking the vow of self-denial simply to please her husband.

Unlike his counter-part in the *Mālavikā*, the *Vidūṣaka* in this drama is a bungling nit-wit whose only interest in life is in courses that charm the palate. This conventional clod-pate is easily duped by the cunning maid-servant Nipunikā and gives out the name of his friend's object of love. Far from assisting the King in his love-affair, he sends word to the queen that he 'would try my best to turn my friend from the pursuit of that mirage!' Worse still is his careless dropping of the precious birch-leaf which lands the King into difficulties. He has the *Vidūṣaka*'s characteristic fondness for sweets.



The rising moon appears to him to be as charming as a sweet-ball ! Heaven won't be worth a moment's purchase to him for 'there is no eating, no drinking there.' Kālidāsa has apparently introduced this character for the purpose of providing humour which he does in the conventional manner—and does little else.

This comparative fade-out of the Vidūṣaka's character is probably a reaction to the almost 'heroic' part which the Vidūṣaka played in the earlier drama. It has the merit, however, of having enabled Kālidāsa in this drama to draw the character of the hero with greater vividness and depth. That the dramatist's characterization has gained in depth can be seen from his portraiture of Purūravas and Urvaśī. Purūravas is a mighty king whose valour has more than once helped the gods in their battles with the demons. He wields supernatural weapons. He has access to the celestial regions. Indra cherishes his company. By such touches he is shown to be above the common run of mortal kings. His chivalry and becoming modesty are revealed by his behaviour with the nymphs and the Gandharva King, Citraratha. His courtesy and large-heartedness are clearly seen when he falls at the feet of the angry queen. His words, 'Although my heart is set on Urvaśī, I have the same regard for the queen as before,' breathe sincerity, although he is too timid to acknowledge the fact of his love for Urvaśī before the queen and tries to deny it. His interest in Urvaśī from the first moment of their meeting is shown by the dramatist to be steadily growing, and soon it becomes a consuming passion. He languishes in Urvaśī's separation as his confidential outpourings in the second and third Acts show ; in her company he wishes 'the nights to lengthen out a hundred-fold.' His love for Urvaśī does not prevent him, however, from gazing at a semi-divine maiden even when his beloved was at his side. The result is that Urvaśī abandons him—the shock is too great for his passionate love and he becomes demented—an erotomaniac. The fourth Act presents him in his lunacy wandering, raving,

threatening, smiling, cajoling—enquiring of birds and beasts and even inanimate objects whether they have seen his beloved. The lover's passionate love and agony are very artistically laid bare by Kālidāsa in this Act. The tragedy of the suffering lover is acute enough and the audience only hopes, with Sahajanyā, that some cause will arise to bless this unfortunate King. In the last Act, he is represented as being ready to renounce his kingdom and retire into a forest as Urvaśī was to return to heaven. He is, however, spared his separation from his beloved, for the gods would need the strength of his arms again in the immediate future.

Compared with the *Mālavik.*, the *Vik.* is weak in point of 'action'. The first Act is brimful with incidents right to the end. How dramatic the opening of the drama is we have already noted. The second Act reveals the King's love for Urvaśī, who overhears his protestations and writes a letter. The letter falls into the hands of the queen and the scene between the husband and wife follows. The third is a natural sequel to the second, the path of the King's love being left clear by the great self-denying vow of the queen. These two Acts do indeed appear unnecessarily to lengthen out without sufficient action being present in them. In fact, the repetition of the arrival of the nymphs at the King's palace in the same manner under the same circumstances without any vital differentiating element in the situations appears rather stale. The introduction of the queen's character is possibly meant to enliven conflict in the drama. But this it hardly succeeds in bringing about. What a contrast between Dhārīṇī who is the mistress of the heroine's fortunes in the *Mālavik.* and Auśīnarī who hardly knows who the object of her husband's attention is! Auśīnarī's character, conventional and ineffective for the purpose of conflict in the drama as it is, has the only merit of enabling Kālidāsa to give five Acts to this play. The fourth Act has little action though it sustains interest on account of its otherwise unique character. The last Act con-



tains the episode of the vulture, the re-union and recognition of the prince Āyus by his parents, the impending separation of the lovers and Indra's intervention and Āyus' coronation as heir-apparent. On the whole, however, the *Vik.* lacks the rapid and consistent flow of action which is the conspicuous feature of the *Mālavikāgnimitra*.

But the drama is rich in poetry. Beautiful descriptions are to be met with in abundance. How vivid is the description of the chariot rolling along in the sky. "These clouds, crushed to powder, are flying about like dust in front of the chariot; the revolving wheels create, as it were, a second line of spokes in the spaces between their spokes. The long *chowries* on the heads of the horses are as still as if drawn in a picture. And the banner-cloth remains horizontally even between the top of its staff and its hem owing to the wind set up by the velocity (of the chariot)." How beautifully the King describes Urvaśī as she is reviving from the swoon! (1.7.) Here is a thrilling description of the cloud on which the lover after separation wishes ecstatically to ride home. "O love of sportive gait, take me to our residence on a cloud turned into an aerial car beflagged with flashes of lightning and decorated with fresh pictures in the form of the rain-bow." (4.43). Indeed, the poet in Kālidāsa seems to have come into his own in this drama. The poet's love of Nature finds ample expression in various descriptions, similes or metaphors. The fourth Act is only to be mentioned in order to be reminded of its rich poetic content. The situation, the description of Nature, the lyrical tone and the lover's anguish in this Act show that here we have the first sketch of the finished lyrical poem that was to be the *Meghadūta*. Similarly, the analysis and delineation of human emotions by means of description and suggestion yield many passages of great poetic power. Indeed, one who reads the *Vikramorvaśīya* may sigh for the 'action' and dramatic interest of the *Mālavikāgnimitra* but he is certain to be happy over the promise which it holds out—of the *Śākuntala* that was to follow.

## (III) ŚĀKUNTALA

*But from these create he can  
Forms more real than living man,  
Nurslings of immortality;*

—Shelley.

“Of the forms of Poetry, the drama is the most charming; among dramas, the *Śākuntala*” (काव्येषु नाटकं रम्यं तत्रापि च शकुन्तला)  
“No composition of Kālidāsa displays more (than the *Śākuntala*) the richness of his poetical genius, the exuberance of his imagination, the warmth and play of his fancy, his profound knowledge of the human heart, his delicate appreciation of its most refined and tender emotions, his familiarity with the workings and counter-workings of its conflicting feelings—in short more entitles him to rank as the Shakespeare of India”—Sir Monier Williams. These quotations are only typical of the chorus of praise and admiration which this play has won from scholars, both Indian and non-Indian. In India the play has an eternal appeal to the mind and heart of the people whose thoughts, feelings, aspirations, ideals—in a word, whose national soul is revealed in it in a manner and measure not quite approached, much less surpassed. Indeed, the *Śākuntala* exercises an almost nostalgic influence on the Indian mind and heart with its holy penance-groves, hermitages full of spiritual calm where Nature is as instinct with life as man, sages engrossed in spiritual meditation, kings full of reverence for these forest-dwellers ‘rich in asceticism’ and ever abiding by the law, the rich happiness of family-life, the social qualities of courtesy and respect for guests and the high regard for moral conduct. Likewise, ever since it was first translated into English by Sir William Jones more than a hundred and fifty years ago, the play has fascinated the Western mind and heart as shown by the lavish tributes showered upon it by Goethe, Lassen, Schelegel, W. Von Humboldt, Sir Monier Williams, Herder, Hillebrandt, to name only



a few. It has been translated practically in all the prominent languages of the world; and even stage-versions of it have been attempted to suit the Western theatre.

The title of the play is *Abhijnānśākuntala*, meaning a drama in which Śakuntalā is recognized or remembered by a token. In this respect its title is similar to that of the *Vikramorvaśīya* which means a drama in which Urvaśī is won by valour. It was, indeed, the valour of Purūravas which brought him and Urvaśī together for the first time and made their love possible; it is, again, his valour by virtue of which the union of the two lovers which was about to end is perpetuated by Indra in the last Act. Similarly, the poet, in naming the *Abhijnānśākuntala* as he has done, obviously attached great importance to the means of recognition of Śakuntalā. As we know, the conception of the ring as the means of re-union of Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā is the fruit of the poet's own creative imagination and is the pivot on which the *denouement* of the play turns. But of this more later. Let us first review the contents of the drama. We may note the fact that the play on account of its very popularity throughout the length and breadth of India has suffered in the matter of its readings so that it is now available in the Kashmirian, Bengali, Devanagari and South Indian versions. This raises important problems of textual criticism; our review, however, is hardly affected by the differences in the various versions.

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After the Prologue in which the stage-manager announces that he is going to enact Kālidāsa's *Śākuntala* and in order to delight the audience sings of the hot season in which "the days are delightful in the evenings," the scene opens with King Duṣyanta riding on a chariot and hotly pursuing a deer which 'now and then gracefully turns its neck and looks at the chariot that is closely pursuing it, and which on account of its high bounds runs more in the sky and less on the ground.' As the King is on the point of releasing his well-aimed arrow,

he is suddenly stopped by three hermits shouting, "O King, the deer belongs to the hermitage—it should not be killed. Stay, stay, the arrow should not be discharged at this tender-bodied deer, like fire on a heap of flowers. Where, on the one hand, the frail life of the deer—poor things!—and where, on the other, your arrows of adamant strength striking (so) sharply? (10). Therefore, withdraw your well-aimed arrow. Your missiles are intended for the protection of the distressed and not for harming those who are innocent." (11). On the King suiting his action to these words, the ascetics bless him with the birth of a sovereign son, and ask him to go and accept the welcome at the hermitage of Sage Kaṇva, which was situated near-by on the bank of the river Mālinī. The sage, of course, was not then in the hermitage as he had gone just about that time to the holy Somatīrtha for appeasing the adverse fate of his daughter Śakuntalā who, in his absence, looked after the guests and their hospitality. Duṣyanta then drives towards the hermitage; he asks the charioteer to keep the chariot in the outer precincts of the hermitage and rest the horses while he went inside. As he enters the gate, he sees three hermit-girls of entrancing beauty carrying water-pots for the purpose of watering the trees. The King hides himself behind a tree and overhears the conversation of the three friends. He is fascinated by the un-earthly bodily charms of Śakuntalā in her blooming youth and dressed in barks.

*Priyamvadā*—O Anasūyā, do you know why Śakuntalā looks intently at the *Vanajyotsnā* creeper?

*Anasūyā*—I can't make out. Tell me, why?

*Priyamvadā*—She thinks, 'Just as the *Vanajyotsnā* is united with a suitable tree, would that I, too, get a worthy husband in the same manner?'

The King is smitten with love for Śakuntalā but wonders whether she could be an eligible bride for him a Kṣatriya. Suddenly, Śakuntalā cries for help as she is attacked by a



bee which was disturbed by her while watering the *Navamālikā* creeper. She calls upon her friends to help her but the latter reply with a smile, 'Who are we to protect you? Call on Duṣyanta. The penance-groves are indeed to be protected by the King.' The King, seizing this opportunity, rushes quickly and enquires as to who was thus acting immodestly with the innocent ascetic-girls. The girls are a little taken aback and then explain that it was nothing serious; only Śakuntalā was frightened by the bee that was rushing at her.

The King is then invited to sit on a platform under a tree and the girls, too, take their seats. Śakuntalā wonders how she was experiencing emotions contrary to the life in the hermitage at the sight of the stranger. Her friends watch her condition and put her the question, 'O Śakuntalā, if the sire were present here today?'—Śakuntalā enquires, 'What would happen then?' to which the significant reply comes, "He would satisfy this distinguished guest with his richest possession in life (meaning Śakuntalā)." The King enquires about Śakuntalā's parentage and learns from her friends that she was the child of the sage Viśvāmitra and the celestial nymph Menakā who had abandoned her as soon as she was born. The sage Kaṇva discovered her in a forest and ever since reared her up as his daughter. The sage did not wish Śakuntalā to remain a spinster all her life but he was waiting until a suitable match was found. At all this conversation turning about her, Śakuntalā feigns anger and tries to flee the place. Priyamvadā, however, stops her, says that she could go only after discharging her debt of two water-pots in the watering of trees and turns her back forcibly. The King observes that Śakuntalā was already tired and he himself offers a ring by way of her discharge from the debt. Priyamvadā, however, returns the ring and asks Śakuntalā to go. "—If I am mistress of myself" mutters Śakuntalā to herself. The King observes that "though she does not mix her speech with my words, yet she lends the ear when I am speaking.

Although she does not stand keeping her face squarely at me, yet for the most part her gaze is not directed anywhere else" (18), and concludes that she too was in much the same condition as he himself.

At this stage a summons is announced to all the inmates of the hermitage to take care of the animals in the hermitage as Duṣyanta had come about the place ahunting. Besides, a wild elephant terrified by the sight of the chariot was rushing into the penance-grove. The girls are nervous at the news and, having bidden good-bye to the King, turn towards the hermitage. Śakuntalā, however, says that her leg was pricked by a pointed *Kuśa*-blade and her garment was caught in the branch of the *Kuravaka* tree. While trying to look after herself, she glances at the King and then walks away with her friends. The King feels averse to return to the capital. (Act I). \*

The second Act opens with the Vidūṣaka, the King's friend, in a dejected mood complaining about the discomforts and hardships in the jungle which hunting entails. To add to his misfortunes, his friend had come upon Śakuntalā, 'the daughter of the ascetic', and so showed no inclination to return to the capital. The King arrives there accompanied by *Yavana* maid-servants carrying bows—though even at the moment his mind is dwelling on the sweet thoughts of Śakuntalā whom he had seen the other day. The Vidūṣaka advises the King to have a day's holiday in hunting—to which the latter readily agrees for quite different reasons. After the orders for the cancellation of hunting for the day have been given, the two friends fall alone. The King says to the Vidūṣaka, "Mādhavya, you have not yet had the fruit of (the possession of) eyes, since you have not seen what is worth seeing—I mean Śakuntalā," and dwells upon the supernal beauty of his beloved. While the friends are trying to find out a pretext for visiting Kaṇva's hermitage again, there arrive two ascetic-boys to inform the King that, as the Patriarch was



away, the sacrifices in the hermitage were being obstructed by the demons, and therefore to request him that he should go to the hermitage and dwell there for some time. The King is only too ready to accept this offer. At this time a messenger from the queen-mother arrives asking the King to honour the occasion of her breaking a religious fast four days hence by his presence. The King is in a quandary: 'Here is the business of ascetics to be attended to; and there is the command of the queen-mother. Neither can be ignored. What shall I do now?' Ultimately he asks the Vidūṣaka to return to the city and represent him at the ceremonial occasion of the queen-mother, while he himself would go to the hermitage. When the Vidūṣaka is about to leave for the city, the King, fearing lest 'this sharp boy' should breath out the story of the royal love to the inmates of the harem, catches him by the hand and says, 'Look here, I am going to the hermitage out of respect for the sage. I am not in reality interested in that ascetic maiden. For, where are we on the one hand and where that person brought up along with fawns and unlearned in love on the other? Let not, my friend, the words spoken in jest be taken seriously.' (18). (Act II).

In the Interlude, a pupil of the sage describes how, with the mere arrival of King Duṣyanta in the hermitage, their religious rites became free from obstruction. Through him we learn of the indisposition of Śakuntalā due to exposure to the sun and of the soothing treatment which was being given to this 'life-breath of the revered sage Kaṇva'.

In the main scene the King enters in a love-sick condition. Looking at his own plight, he addresses the god of love: 'O revered flower-armed God, lovers are indeed deceived by you and the moon, both looking so trustworthy. For, the fact of flowers being your arrows and that of the rays of the moon being cool—both of these are untrue in cases like mine. the moon showers fire with cooling rays and you, too, endow your flowery arrows with adamantine toughness!' (3). As he is

wandering about to pass the time somewhere, he is agreeably surprised to find his beloved in an arbour, lying on a bed of flowers on a slab of stone and attended upon by her two friends. Śakuntalā is very much indisposed. Priyamvadā remarks to Anasūyā that Śakuntalā appeared uneasy ever since she first set her eyes on the King and possibly her present indisposition is all on that account. The two friends in the privacy of the place extract the confession from Śakuntalā that she was deeply in love with the King. She requests her friends to manage to make her 'an object of compassion' of the King; otherwise they should know that her days were numbered. Anasūyā and Priyamvadā approve of Śakuntalā's choice of her mate—'Where could a big river flow except into the ocean! Who, indeed, except the fragrant mango-tree can bear the *Atimukta* creeper rich with tender sprouts?' At their suggestion, Śakuntalā writes the following love-message on a lotus-leaf with her nails: "I know not your heart. As for me, day and night Cupid oppresses my limbs, longing as I am for you, O pitiless one." At this, the King who was overhearing everything approaches and says, "O slender-bodied one, Cupid only oppresses thee ceaselessly—me he actually consumes. The day does not blight the moon-lotus as much as it does the moon." (15). When Priyamvadā requests him to bless their friend with his company, Śakuntalā gently dissuades her from "embarrassing the King who must be full of anxiety on account of separation from his queens." The King protests his intense love for Śakuntalā, whereupon the two friends retire from the place under a pretext. Śakuntalā avoids her lover's blandishments—"O Scion of the Purū race, observe decorum. Even though oppressed by love, I am not a mistress of myself," and asks to be let free. Duṣyanta tries to raise his beloved's face with a desire to gently enjoy the taste of 'this—thy lower lip.' Śakuntalā obstructs his attempt. A voice from behind the scene shouts, "O female Cakravāka, take leave of your mate. The night is at hand." Śakuntalā hurriedly asks the King to hide himself behind the boughs



as the elderly Gautamī was coming there to enquire after her health. Gautamī and the two friends of Śakuntalā arrive there and, as it was already evening time, Gautamī takes Śakuntalā back with her. But before proceeding far, Śakuntalā halts and cries, 'O bower of creepers that alleviated my pain, I bid you good-bye only to enjoy again.'

While the King feels reluctant to leave that bower so full of associations about his beloved, a voice calls him to duty—'O King, as the evening sacrificial rites are commenced, shadows of demons, tawny like the evening-cloud, are moving about here and there around the altar with the fire kindled and are creating consternation.' (Act III).

The fourth Act, again, has an Interlude in which Anasūyā and Priyamvadā are engaged in plucking flowers. Anasūyā confesses her satisfaction at Śakuntalā having found a worthy spouse but expresses a lurking doubt whether the King after returning to the capital would forget the happenings in the hermitage. Priyamvadā bids her be calm, 'for, such distinguished personalities can never betray their qualities.' Both the friends agree that sage Kaṇva will readily bless Śakuntalā's choice. And as they are busy collecting some more flowers because they were to offer worship to the Deity of Good Luck on behalf of Śakuntalā, they hear a shout from behind the curtain—'Here I am.' Of course, Śakuntalā was there in the hermitage to receive the guest, yet, as Anasūyā remarks, she was 'absent by her heart.' Suddenly they hear—

"O thou that dost insult a guest, that person lost in whose thoughts and therefore minding nothing else thou dost not take notice of me, an ascetic, who has arrived here—that person, even though reminded, shall not remember thee like a drunken fellow who does not remember the topic previously conversed about." (1).

Alas, Śakuntalā, being absent-minded, had offended the irascible sage Durvāsas who turned back hastily after annou-

neing the curse upon her. Priyamvadā runs after him to plead with him and beg him return, but is only partially successful in her mission; for, the sage, 'perverse by nature,' declined to return. When, however, Priyamvadā pleaded against the curse, he said that his curse could not be falsified, but it would end at the sight of some token of recognition. Anasūyā heaves a sigh of relief, for, when the King was about to leave for his capital, he had placed a ring bearing his name round Śakuntalā's finger as a memento: this would help Śakuntalā. The two friends return to the hermitage where they see Śakuntalā with her face resting on the left hand as if drawn in a picture. Lost in thoughts of her husband, she is hardly conscious of her own self—what to say then of a guest?"

The main scene opens with the description of early morning by a pupil of the sage Kaṇva who has returned from his journey:

यात्येकतोऽस्तशिखरं पतिरोषधीना—

माविष्कृतारुणपुरःसर एकतोऽर्कः ।

तेजोद्वयस्य युगपद्व्यसनोदयाभ्यां

लोको नियम्यत इदात्मदशान्तरेषु ॥ —2

(On one side the lord of herbs, *i.e.*, the moon is descending on the top of the western mountain and on the other side the sun shows his herald the Aruṇa. By the simultaneous downfall and rise of the two luminaries, the people are as it were controlled in their changing fortunes.) Anasūyā then enters in a mood of sullenness and anger because they have heard nothing from the King since he returned to his capital. While she is worried as to how to break the news to Kaṇva, about Śakuntalā's delicate condition, Priyamvadā rushes in full of joy because Śakuntalā was going to her husband's capital that very morning. She explains that when Kaṇva went into the Fire Sanctuary, he was informed by an incorporeal voice that Śakuntalā was 'bearing the seed planted by Duṣyanta for the prosperity of the world.' The two friends then collect the available decorative materials and go to Śakuntalā who was



surrounded by ascetic-women conferring blessings upon her. They begin to decorate her but feel the utter inadequacy of the materials for their friend's beauty. Just then a pupil brings ornaments and, to the astonishment of every one, explains that when at the command of the sage they went to fetch flowers from the trees and plants, 'By some tree was put forth an auspicious silken cloth white like the moon; by another liquid lac-dye—suitable for application to the feet—was bubbled out. And from other trees decorations were offered by the palms—revealed upto the wrists—of the sylvan divinities which resembled their bursting tender sprouts!' The friends then decorate Śakuntalā as best they might.

Then enters the sage Kāśyapa (Kaṇva) having just finished his bath and reflecting:—

यास्यत्यद्य शकुन्तलेति हृदयं संस्पृष्टमुत्कण्ठया  
कण्ठः स्तम्भितवाष्पवृत्तिकलुषश्चिन्ताजडं दर्शनम् ।

वेङ्कव्यं मम तावदीदृशमिदं श्लेहादरूप्योक्तसः

पीड्यन्ते गृहिणः कथं नु तनयाविश्लेषदुःखैर्नवैः ॥ —6

(At the thought that Śakuntalā is departing today my heart is touched by anxiousness, my throat is choked on account of the flow of tears being suppressed, and my gaze is vacant through anxiety. If such is the perturbation felt by me—a dweller in the forest—on account of affection, what varied pangs of separation from their daughters must the worldly people be suffering?) Kaṇva blesses Śakuntalā and, after she has paid her respects to the sacrificial fires, she starts for her journey, surrounded by her two friends, Gautamī and some pupils of the sage. Kaṇva addresses the trees in the hermitage:—

पातुं न प्रथमं व्यवस्यति जलं युष्मास्वपीतेषु या

नादत्ते प्रियमण्डनापि भवतां श्लेहेन या पल्लवम् ।

आद्ये वः कुसुमप्रसूतिसमये यस्या भवत्युत्सवः

सेयं याति शकुन्तला पतिगृहं सर्वैरनुजायताम् ॥ —9

(This Śakuntalā who never wishes to drink water while you are all yet un-watered; who, fond though she is of decora-

tions, never plucks a sprout from you through affection ; who enjoys festal celebration on the occasion of your first blossoming—she, this Śakuntalā, is today leaving for her husband's home. Pray, let her receive the permission of you all !) A cuckoo's note is heard and then an incorporeal voice wishes her a safe and pleasant journey. Śakuntalā feels the agony of departure, but the plight of the hermitage is hardly better : 'the hinds have given up their morsels of *darbha*-grass, the peacocks have stopped dancing and the creepers with grey leaves falling are shedding tears as it were.' While she bids farewell to the *Vanajyotsnā*—'my sister, the creeper'—and the young deer, she is overpowered with emotion. The party then arrives at a lake where they all sit under the shade of a tree, and Kaṇva asks his pupils who were to escort Śakuntalā on the journey to convey the following message to King Duṣyanta :—

अस्मान्साधु विचिन्त्य संयमधनानुच्चैः कुलं चाल्मन—

स्वव्यस्याः कथमप्यब्रान्धवकृतां स्नेहप्रवृत्तिं च ताम् ।

सामान्यप्रतिपूर्वकर्मियं दारेषु दृश्या त्वया

भाग्यायत्तमतः परं न खलु तद्वाच्यं बधून्बन्धुभिः ॥ —17

(Bearing well in mind us who are rich (only) in self-restraint, and your family so exalted and that spontaneous rise of love for you in this (Śakuntalā) which was not brought about by her relatives, you should look upon her with the common regard for all your queens. More than this depends on her fate, and it should not be expressed by the wife's relatives.) To Śakuntalā he gives the advice :—

शुश्रूषस्व गुरुकुलं प्रियसखीवृत्तिं सपत्नीजने

भर्तुर्विप्रकृतापि रोषणतया मा स्म प्रतीपं गमः ।

दाक्षिण्यं स्वजने दद्या परजने भाग्येष्वनुत्सेकिनी

यात्येवं गृहिणीपदं युवतयो वामाः कुलस्याधयः ॥ —18

(Serve the elders ; adopt the attitude of a dear friend towards thy co-wives ; even if offended by thy husband's anger, do not go against him ; (show) courtesy to friends, consideration to



strangers and humility in prosperity—in this manner young maidens attain to the station of a house-wife: Others are the bane of their families.) Śakuntalā embraces Kaṇva and then her two friends simultaneously, the latter two just throwing a suggestion to her to show the ring to the King in case he fails to recognize her. And then escorted by two pupils, Śārṅgarava and Śāradvata, and the elderly Gautamī, Śakuntalā departs, leaving the sage and her two friends to return to the vacant hermitage. (Act IV).

The fifth Act commences with a musical air which King Duṣyanta and his friend, the Vidūṣaka, identify as a ditty sung by Hansapadikā in the music hall:

अहिणवमहुलोलुबो तुमं तह परिचुम्बिअ चूमन्नरिं ।

कमलवसइमेसेगिबुदो महुअर विम्हरिओ सि णं कहं ॥

(O bee, ever thirsting for fresh honey as you are, how is it that having in that manner kissed the mango-blossom, you have forgotten it, remaining satisfied (now) with the mere residence in the lotus-flower?) The King confesses that Hansapadikā was once loved by him and then neglected, and sends the Vidūṣaka to tell her that her taunt to him was cleverly conceived. The King, left alone now, feels somehow anxious after hearing the song and is unable to explain the reason why. Then enters the chamberlain who informs him about the arrival of some ascetics who had a message from sage Kaṇva and had women with them. The King asks him to arrange for their reception in consultation with the family-priest who should then bring them to the Fire-Sanctuary where he would grant them an audience. The ascetics with Śakuntalā in front of them arrive escorted by the priest and the chamberlain. They express a feeling of uneasiness in the crowds of the palace. Śakuntalā with her face veiled is highly nervous and finds her right eye throbbing. After courtesies have been exchanged, Śāradvata delivers the message of Kaṇva that Duṣyanta's marriage with Śakuntalā had his approval and that the King should now receive his wife who was in a deli-

cate condition. The King ejaculates—‘What is all this about? Was this lady ever married by me?’ Śārṅgarava accuses him of back-sliding and pride of power. Gautamī uncovers Śakuntalā’s face—its beauty is as natural as it is ravishing; but Duṣyanta does not remember his having married her before. Śakuntalā is then asked to convince the King.

*Śakuntalā*:—O Paurava, is it proper for you, after having once deceived this person, noble by nature, in that manner in the hermitage, now to repudiate her with such words?

*King*:—(Putting his hands to the ears)—Perish the evil. Dost thou wish to sully my family and degrade me?

*Śakuntalā*:—Well. If you are behaving like this because you are really doubting whether I am some body else’s wife, I shall remove that doubt by this token of recognition.

*King*:—A capital idea!

*Śakuntalā* (feeling for the ring on the finger)—‘Alas, my finger has no ring on it! (She looks at Gautamī with sorrow): Then she tries to stimulate the memory of the King by narrating an episode between them and a fawn in the hermitage, which however is dismissed by him as ‘honeyed words of untruth handed out by self-seeking women.’ The King makes a scandalous remark about the ‘inborn cunning’ of women, at which Śakuntalā, full of rage, sharply says, “Thou, ill-bred man, thou judgest everyone by thy own heart; who else will ever follow thee wearing the robes of Dharma but resembling a well, covered with grass?” Afterwards she covers her face with her skirt and sobs. Śārṅgarava exchanges hot words with Duṣyanta; ultimately Śāradvata says to the King: “Here she is—your wife. Receive her or turn her out as you please. For, absolute is the power of husbands over their wives.” (26). The ascetics then proceed to leave and Śakuntalā in her helplessness tries to follow them. She is however sharply rebuked by Śārṅgarava and stands trembling with fear. The King at this stage seeks the advice of



his preceptor who says that Śakuntalā might be given shelter until delivery. If she gave birth to a son bearing marks of sovereignty as Duṣyanta's first son was predicted to, she would be duly received into the harem; otherwise she would be sent back to her father. The King agrees and as the preceptor asks Śakuntalā to come with him she cried, 'O mother earth, give me room (in thy bosom)' and goes out crying. Suddenly, the preceptor comes back and narrates to the King how Śakuntalā who was piteously crying was taken away by some lustrous heavenly Being.

The Act closes with the King thinking and confessing that he was feeling convinced of his marriage 'with the ascetic's daughter' by the grief which was overpowering his heart.(Act V).

The sixth Act begins with an Interlude in which policemen are 'investigating' how the fisherman whom they had caught selling a royal ring had come by it. The latter explains that he found it in the belly of a fish which he had caught near Śakrāvātāra. The ring was taken to the King along with the story of its discovery: and, lo, on seeing it, the King recovered the memory of his beloved and was full of tears.

The main scene shows the celestial nymph Sānumati descending unseen in the royal garden where two girls in charge of the garden were engaged in conversation. The vernal season had just set in, and so the garden-keepers pluck some mango-blossoms and make an offering of them to the God of love—but they are scolded by the chamberlain, who suddenly arrives there because the celebration of the vernal festival was forbidden by the King who was full of remorse at his unjustified repudiation of his lawfully wedded wife Śakuntalā.

The King arrives in the garden in the company of the Vidūṣaka. He is emaciated and love-sick and full of remorse. The sight of the mango-blossoms inflames his pangs and he sends a maid-servant to fetch the portrait of his beloved which he has drawn himself so that he might console himself by looking at it. How keen is the distress of the King now that he

remembers everything so vividly and feels the enormity of his guilt in disowning his helpless beloved ! He looks at the ring and sympathises with it for its 'very little stock of good actions', since having once found its place on Śakuntalā's finger it had happened to slip out. He clearly remembers now how he had reassured his beloved who was full of tears at the time of his departure for his capital : "Putting this ring on her finger, I said to her, 'Day by day, count the letters of my name on this ring, one by one. When you will come to the end (of the letters), messengers will come to you, O my love, to carry you to my harem'. (12)". The maid-servant brings the picture and the two friends scan its details. The King says he has yet to make additions in the painting and asks the maid-servant to fetch the brush and colours. While studying the painting, the Vidūṣaka realizes that 'the wretched bee, that steals the juice of flowers, is rushing at the lotus-face of her ladyship.' The King is so engrossed in the thoughts of his beloved that he orders the bee—drawn in the picture—to desist from its attack : "If you don't abide by my orders, then listen : In case, O bee, you touch the *Bimba*-like lower lip of my beloved which is as attractive as a fresh sprout of a tender plant and which I have kissed gently in love-sports—then, I shall imprison you in the interior of a lotus !" (20). The Vidūṣaka warns him that it was merely a picture. The King asks him what an offence he has committed in reminding him that way and turning his beloved into a picture ! By this time the maid-servant returns and reports that Queen Vasumatī had snatched the painting materials from her hand and she was on her way to visit the King. But just then the door-keeper arrives with an important message. She reports that the queen turned back on seeing the document of state in her hand. The message from the minister reports the death in a ship-wreck of Dhanamitra, a wealthy overseas trader. As he had no issue, all his property becomes forfeit to the King. At this report the King pities the lot of childless persons and orders an enquiry whether any of the merchant's widows was



carrying. On being told that one of them was reported to be *enciente*, he says, "Well, then, the child in the womb inherits the paternal property." He fears that a like fate was hanging over his race owing to his having no issue—he had cast away his lawful wife in whom he had planted the seed of his race. This thought overwhelms him and he falls in a swoon. At this stage Sānumatī who was witness to the protestations, remorse and suffering of love of the King for Śakuntalā goes away to cheer up Śakuntalā with this news.

Suddenly the Vidūṣaka's cries for help are heard. The King having revived from the swoon wonders how his own palace was being infested by evil spirits and calls for his bow and arrow. The invisible spirit which has caught hold of the King's friend utters defiance at him. As the King fastens the arrow on the bow, Mātali, Indra's charioteer, appears before him and delivers Indra's message that an invincible host of demons born of Kālanemi was destined to be exterminated by the King and therefore he should start in Indra's chariot without loss of time to conquer them. The King accepts this behest of Indra, but wants to know from Mātali why he treated the Vidūṣaka so unceremoniously. Mātali explains that he saw His Majesty in a despondent mood and so he used the trick to provoke him to anger. The King then sends the Vidūṣaka to inform the minister about this recent development and himself gets into Indra's chariot. (Act VI).

In the last Act, Duṣyanta, having defeated the demons and enjoyed the reception—warm beyond imagination—of Indra in the assembly of gods, is returning from heaven to the earth in Indra's chariot. As the chariot speeds down from above the clouds, the King describes the thrilling spectacle which the earth presents to them :

शैलानामवरोहतीव शिखरादुन्मज्जतां मेदिनी  
पर्णाम्भ्यन्तरलीनतां विजहति स्कन्धोदयात्पादपाः ।  
संतानैस्तनुभावनष्टसलिला व्यक्तं भजन्यापगाः  
केनाप्युल्लिखतेव पश्य भुवनं मत्पाद्वर्मानियते ॥ —8

(The earth is descending, as it were, from the tops of hills that are rising up, the trees are abandoning their state of lying concealed under the leaves on account of the trunks becoming visible, the rivers whose water had disappeared (from view) owing to their narrowness are springing into view with their expansion—behold, the earth is as it were being thrown up by some one and brought near me!) The King's attention is drawn by the sight of the Hemakūṭa mountain, the holy place where penances yield their fruits and where Mārīca, the son of the self-born Marīci and the preceptor of both gods and demons, was practising penances in the company of his wife, Aditi. He wishes to pay respects to the great Sage and asks Mātali to drive the chariot there. On reaching the un-earthly regions of the place, he learns that the Sage was busy giving a discourse to his wife and the other ascetic-women on the duties of faithful wives. Mātali goes inside the hermitage in order to announce the King's arrival there, while the latter sits under an Aśoka tree, wondering at the throbbing of his right arm—a good omen. There his attention is drawn to a young boy forcibly trying to drag a cub of a lion away from its mother. At the sight of this boy, named 'Śarvadamana' by the sages because he troubled all, the King feels paternal affection for him. One of the ascetic women goes to fetch a toy peacock so that the boy may be made to release the cub. Sarvadamana looks at the other nurse and says with a smile, 'In the meanwhile, I shall play on with this very cub!' Thereupon, the nurse calls the King for help. The King disengages the cub from the boy—the nurse is struck by the similarity of features of the boy and the stranger. The King learns from the ascetic-woman that the boy was the son of a King of the Purū race—"Who would care to utter the name of him who has abandoned his lawful wife?" The King, with hope rising in his heart, wonders what the name of the boy's mother was. Just then arrives the nurse with the toy-peacock—"Sarvadamana, look at the beauty of the bird. (शकुन्तलावप्यम्)" The boy enquired, looking around, "Where



is my mother?" The King thus learns the name—Śakuntalā, but the name was hardly conclusive evidence. As he picks up an armlet which had slipped out of the hand of the boy, the ascetic-women are all astonishment, for none but the parent of the boy could pick the charmed armlet from the ground without being harmed. They rush out to report the glad news of Duṣyanta's arrival to Śakuntalā, while the King tries to fondle his son who remonstrates, 'My father is Duṣyanta; not you.'

Then arrives Śakuntalā "who wearing a pair of discoloured garments, her face emaciated by observance of vows, hair tied into a single knot, and pure of conduct, is practising a protracted vow of separation from me who have been so cruel (to her)". (21). She is choked with tears as she greets the King with the words, 'Victory to my lord.' The King full of remorse falls at her feet. The separated husband and wife are reunited. The King explains how it was the recovery of the ring which brought him to remember the incidents in Kaṇva's hermitage. He offers to restore the ring to Śakuntalā's finger; she, however, replies, "My lord should wear it himself. I cannot trust it." Then Duṣyanta accompanied by Śakuntalā and Sarvadamana goes into the hermitage and offers his respects to the Ancient Sage and his wife and receives their blessings. Mārīca explains how the curse of Durvāsa was responsible for the loss of the King's memory of Śakuntalā and her subsequent repudiation. A pupil is sent to sage Kaṇva to apprise him of the happy reunion. The King along with his wife Śakuntalā and son Bharata—as Sarvadamana was destined to be known later on—prepares to return to his capital in the chariot of Indra. The usual benedictory stanza concludes the drama. (Act VII).

*Śakuntalā*—utter the word and what a number of charming, tender, pathetic, ennobling associations arise in our mind! To practically every one acquainted with the name, Śakuntalā means Kālidāsa's Śakuntalā, and the story of her love

and marriage,—the story found in the poet's drama. The story of the love of Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā is narrated in the *Ādi Parvan* of the *Mahābhārata* and in the *Padma Purāṇa*. The *Padma Purāṇa* version on the face of it is based on Kālidāsa's drama the sequence of whose incidents among other details is meticulously followed by the *Purāṇa*. The story in the *Mahābhārata*, however, differs in material details from the drama and, from its crude and archaic form, appears to have supplied the material which the rich creative genius of the poet licked into a shape of abiding charm. According to the *Mahābhārata*, when Duṣyanta visited Kaṇva's hermitage, the sage had gone out to gather flowers and fruits; Śakuntalā welcomed him and asked him to wait until the return of her 'father'; she herself narrated the story of her birth; when the King invited her to marry him by the *Gāndharva* form of marriage, she at first declined but later on consented to the proposal on condition that the son born to her must succeed Duṣyanta on the throne; then they married according to the *Gāndharva* rite and enjoyed conjugal pleasures; then having promised to send for her to his capital without delay, the King went away, fearing lest Kaṇva should arrive and curse him for his behaviour; he remembered Śakuntalā but did not send for her; in course of time Śakuntalā gave birth to a son; when he was six years old, Kaṇva sent Śakuntalā along with the child to her husband; however, the King denied all knowledge about Śakuntalā who thereupon sermonized to him about Dharma and Truth, and, as the King still refused to accept her, she walked away; but at that time a divine voice asked the King to dismiss all doubts and receive his lawful wife and son; the King then received Śakuntalā and Bharata and explained that his previous repudiation of Śakuntalā was due to the apprehension lest people should question his moral integrity.

To this skeleton of a story Kālidāsa added flesh and blood and skin and, above all, that which divides a corpse from the



living being—life. His deep dramatic insight, keen poetic faculty, knowledge of the workings of the human heart, love of Nature and ideals of life—all these have combined together in producing this dramatic master-piece of unusual beauty and interest. The forwardness and indelicacy of *Mahābhārata's* Śakuntalā who welcomes the King herself and narrates the story of her birth as well are eliminated by the poet's creation of her two graceful companions—Priyamvadā and Anasūyā. Though, in the drama, too, it is Śakuntalā's duty to offer welcome to the guest, yet not a word is uttered by her—how the poet's insight and art have scored in delineating the graceful modesty and the first experience of amorous feeling of his heroine by making her speak without words! In the drama, the sage Kaṇva has not gone to fetch flowers or fuel-sticks—he had enough pupils to do that; he has gone to Somatīrtha for appeasing some evil that might befall his daughter. In this change we see the dramatist at work; for, while Kaṇva's absence is thus directly connected with the main theme, it makes it possible for the hermits to ask the King to stay at the hermitage for some time and thus leaves an opportunity for the development and consummation of the love of the hero and the heroine. Even Durvāsas' curse would not be possible except for Kaṇva's continued absence. The softening of the curse by Durvāsas is also due to Kaṇva's timely intervention by performing the rites at Somatīrtha. Thus this little change serves as a hinge on which many important happenings of the drama turn. Again, Śakuntalā is sent to her husband's capital before delivery—an element in the situation which deepens the tragedy of her repudiation. Duṣyanta's disowning of Śakuntalā is not due to any back-sliding or fear of public scandal on his part; he had forgotten Śakuntalā in consequence of Durvāsas' curse which was begotten by the very intensity of her love for her sweet-heart. Looked at this way, the curse and Śakuntalā's subsequent repudiation by her husband are the retribution of her own all-too-passionate love. The dramatist has thus rescued his hero

from the taints of character which his proto-type has in the *Mahābhārata*. Again, what a far cry it is from the Śakuntalā of the *Mahābhārata* who boldly exchanges arguments with the King when he disowns her and her child and cites the rules of Dharma to the bashful young maiden brought up in the lap of Nature and ascetic simplicity, torn between various feelings and making almost tragic efforts to revive the memory of the King by citing one or the other episode that had taken place during their stay together in the hermitage! The carrying away of Śakuntalā by a celestial Being, Bharata's birth in the celestial regions of Mārīca's hermitage, the accidental loss of the Royal ring, its discovery by the fisherman—these links in the chain of the plot we owe to the creative imagination of Kālidāsa.

The opening hunting-scene commences the action in the drama, although the scene itself is more descriptive and poetical than dramatic. In how bright and idyllic surroundings of Kaṇva's hermitage in the forest the main scene of the first Act is laid! The sunny gaiety, the playful mirth, the unspoilt nature and maidenly decorum of the three youthful maidens are delineated with a rare delicacy. The steady growth of love in the heart of Śakuntalā is cleverly unfolded through her behaviour, ending up with the bark-garment incident which she utilizes for having a parting look of longing at the King. The second Act is a sequel to the first: it gives a physical and psychological 'close-up' view of Śakuntalā as she was in the first Act from the mouth of the love-smiten King. This Act contains little action and may be looked upon as a protracted Interlude linking up the events of the first and the third Acts. In the third Act, the love-lorn Śakuntalā is suffering acutely and as she writes the love-letter to her sweet-heart, the latter arrives there, pledges his heart to his beloved—and the two lovers are left alone. With great propriety, the dramatist announces the arrival of Gautamī, and Śakuntalā asks the King to hide behind the boughs. Al-



though when alone with her lover her maidenly bashfulness resisted all his blandishments, yet love has now made her bold enough to 'take leave of the bower for enjoyment again.' The course of the love of the hero and the heroine runs smooth until the end of the third Act which, as it were, marks the end of the first stage. The conflict upto the third Act has been mainly internal. The King, on being fascinated by Śakuntalā's beauty had a struggle in his heart whether she could be loved or not. The real conflict, however, lies in Śakuntalā's simplicity of heart, her ascetic breeding, overpowering sense of maidenly propriety, etc., on the one hand and the rising tide of love in her heart which she struggles but fails to repress.

The Interlude before the fourth Act marks the turning point in the theme with its reference to the curse of Duvāsas. It is the first rumble of the dark clouds that are looming over the horizon. The description of the morning—'By means of the simultaneous down-fall and rise of the two luminaries, the people are as it were controlled in their changing fortunes—' carries an ominous hint that life—or love—is not all joy. That Kālidāsa has relegated the incident of Duvāsas' curse, which is so vital an episode in the drama, only to an Interlude speaks volumes about his dramatic insight and mastery of its technique. The main scene—of Śakuntalā's farewell—in the fourth Act is monumental in its poetic content, revelation of the emotions of the paternal heart at the impending departure of his daughter and lofty social and moral ideals. The anxiousness of Kaṇva, Anasūyā and Priyamvadā's anxiety turned into joy, the moving pathos of the farewell address to the trees of the hermitage, Kaṇva's message to the King and advice to the would-be housewife, the sorrow of the two friends at Śakuntalā's departure and the stark vacancy of the hermitage—these various feelings or situations are depicted with such profound understanding and depth of tenderness that this Act almost appears to be the human heart, fashioned out of words. The mood of pathos is accentuated by the little song of Hansa padikā

in the fifth Act in which the plot of the drama reaches its crisis in the repudiation of Śakuntalā. If the fourth Act is more poetical—though not the less dramatic on that account, the fifth one is throughout dramatic. The curse of Durvāsas has taken effect: Śakuntalā, however, was banking upon her husband's ring in case the latter failed to recognise her. And then we witness in this Act a lover and husband turned a stranger with a high sense of morality and the wife quick with child seeking the warmth and delight of shelter under his roof. What an unequal and therefore tragic struggle poor Śakuntalā puts up in order to quicken the memory of her spouse against the latter's cold self-possession and superior, manly and royal accomplishments! The hot words which Śārṅgarava exchanges with the King on Śakuntalā's behalf serve only to underline the helplessness of her plight. The knot of this unnatural situation is cut by Śakuntalā being carried off by some supernatural Being.

The Interlude of the sixth Act is remarkable for its popular realistic scene of policemen beating and interrogating a fisherman who had a royal ring in his possession. What a vivid cross section of real popular conditions the dramatist has opened up by the presentation of the manners and conversation of the fisherman and the police officials? The sixth Act is an aftermath of the fifth, brought about by the token of recognition—the ring; and it shows the depth of anguish of the King for his beloved whom he had discarded. With the news about the death of the sea-merchant, the emphasis shifts from the King's beloved to his son—and, let us note, it is through the recognition of the son that the beloved is recognized by the King in the last Act. The pathetic situation is suddenly transformed into a tense one of wonder, anger and humour by the Mātali-Vidūṣaka scene. The last Act is laid in regions above the earth. In the supernatural beauty and purity of Mārīca's hermitage, the situation slowly but steadily unfolds itself with the recognition of the son—here



one may easily recall Schlegel's wild joy at the poet's delineation of the emotions of a childless man—followed by the reunion with Śakuntalā. The eternal sage and his wife bless the King and his family—in such pure and tranquil atmosphere the drama ends.

The careful reader will note how Kālidāsa creates the atmosphere for an incident or event by suggestive or symbolical devices. The Bee-episode is only a prelude to Śakuntalā coming under the influence of Duṣyanta who is literally a *Madhukara* (a bee) as Hansapadikā well calls him later. The description of the wild elephant rushing into the penance-grove and creating consternation all round may well be significantly suggestive of Duṣyanta's love with Śakuntalā and the consequences which it entailed on the life in the hermitage. How philosophical and at the same time suggestive of the impending repudiation of Śakuntalā is the description of the morning by Kaṇva's pupil? Hansapadikā's song reveals Duṣyanta as a man of unsteady love and thus, apart from the curse, prepares us to a certain extent for the repudiation of Śakuntalā. The buoyancy and delight of Duṣyanta and Mātali as they recall the warm reception accorded by Indra to the victorious King are just the earnest of the delight and happiness of reunion which the King was to enjoy at no distant time.

Kālidāsa's art of characterization is revealed at its best in this drama. The characters are drawn from varied stations of life and every one of them has a social, moral and intellectual back-ground which nurses them and enables the artist with a deep perception and understanding of human life to endow them with life and personality. Sages like Kaṇva and Mārīca, pupils like Śārṅgarava and Śāradvata, the adult Gautamī, the young maidens like Śakuntalā and her friends and the naughty little Sarvadamana: the King, the Vidūṣaka, the army-commander, the policemen, the fisherman—all these are living characters possessing an individuality of their own.

Sometimes, as we have seen, entire scenes are devoted to the delineation of the thoughts or emotions of the characters which in this very process continue to develop. What a masterly piece of character-revelation the first Act presents, where Śakuntalā's thoughts and feelings are slowly unfolded by her reactions to the conversation of her two friends with the King ! In the fourth Act, every word that Kaṇva utters reveals the father in him. The main scene in the fifth Act—that of Śakuntalā's repudiation—is as interesting for its superb characterization as for its highly dramatic situation. How the difference between the two pupils bubbles up in sharp outline from their speeches ! How the kingly dignity, the high moral sense, the courtesy, the impatient forbearance even when libelled, the reasonableness, the impatience at Śakuntalā's allegation that he had married her, the masculine superiority complex, the perplexity as to how to meet the situation—how all these varied traits of Duṣyanta rise in bold relief as the scene progresses ! How, again, the expectancy, the simplicity of the trusting heart, the guileless innocence with which she opens her pleading with the King, the lofty anger of injured innocence, the helplessness—how vividly Śakuntalā with her changing feelings stands out before our imagination ! In the seventh Act, the delineation of child-nature and the portrayal of the anguish of a childless heart have been accomplished with a skill and insight that are rarely to be equalled.

Duṣyanta, the hero, is a King having an impressive personality and endowed with intellectual and artistic gifts. The assistance of his mighty arms is sought even by the gods in their struggle against the demons. He is a conscientious ruler, paying homage to sages and looking after the safety of their penances and sacrifices, and a dutiful King ever on the alert to protect his subjects in danger and to console them in distress. His courtesy, nobility and chivalry are well revealed in the first Act. Although Duṣyanta-as-a-lover is—or should be—the dominant note of his characterization,



yet the various aspects of his personality—King, man, lover, warrior—are closely intermingled and dove-tailed into each other by Kālidāsa, thus presenting him as a complex human being that one is in real life. He is polygamous, as all Kings could be by custom, but has the honesty to acknowledge that he had neglected one of his loves and transferred his heart to another. He falls in love with Śakuntalā at first sight. He minutely notices the latter's reactions to his presence and becomes hopeful of the fulfilment of his love. When owing to the curse of Durvāsa he fails to recognize Śakuntalā, he has the high moral sense to refuse to receive her despite her captivating charms of the body. The lover in him reappears at the sight of the ring; his penitence and grief for Śakuntalā reveal the depth and sincerity of his love for her.

The Vidūṣaka appears in this drama in sharper outline than in the *Vik*. He is the *confidant* of the King whose love of hunting he does not exactly like, though he would be ready to share rich dishes with him. For the same reason, *viz.*, the hard life in the jungle, he at first tries to pour cold water on the King's enthusiasm for Śakuntalā but afterwards wishes him god-speed in the affair. True to his tribe, he feigns cowardice, tries to cut jokes and create laughter. Sometimes his side-remarks betray his intelligence which he cloaks under pretended stupidity.

Kaṇva, the patriarch, whose spiritual attainments are such that evil spirits avoid his presence, sylvan divinities offer presents at his request and ethereal voices serve to guide him, is yet human enough to rear the foundling child—Śakuntalā—with such paternal care that the self-controlled ascetic for once experiences worldly pangs at her departure from the hermitage. Of the two pupils, Śārṅgarava is comparatively quick of temper and he chides and libels the King when the latter repudiates Śakuntalā. He is equally down-right in his dealing with Śakuntalā when she, in utter helplessness, tries to follow them out. Śāradvata is cool and staid of man-

ner. The policemen are typical representatives of the long arm of the law. How, perhaps, like policemen the world over, they change their spots when the fisherman receives a present from the King and suggest that they should celebrate the occasion over the bottle! The bold little Sarva-damana with his childish innocence and roguish smile captures our heart once for all. The learned family-priest, the commander who, a loyal servant, is yet a human being and the chamberlain with his customary canestaff are other male characters in the drama.

Śakuntalā has inherited her mother's heavenly beauty of form. Apart from this, she is literally a child of Nature—in her simplicity, love of trees and creepers and deer, and her artless manners. She has breathed and imbibed the purity of the hermitage where she has been living. She is blooming in youth and very naturally wonders at her unusual feelings at the sight of the King. Here, too, her maidenly modesty, feigned anger and truculent behaviour only serve to reveal her heart. Youth and love have taught her in no time to pretend that her garment was entangled in a creeper and to steal a glance at Duṣyanta. Her sense of womanly modesty is too overpowering for her to breathe the secret of her pangs and misery even to her bosom friends. At the suggestion of her friends she addresses a love-letter to her lover, but owing to her maidenly reserve and decorum she refuses to yield to the blandishments of the latter when they are left alone in the bower. The same Śakuntalā, however, could summon courage and forwardness enough to invite her lover again for the pleasure of his company under the pretext of the fare-well address to the bower! After Duṣyanta's return to his capital, the love-smitten Śakuntalā who showed signs of pregnancy was weighed down with the thoughts of her lover and, in the intensity of her brooding, was lost to her surroundings—even to her own self. What wrenches at her heart she feels when she departs from the hermitage and takes leave of the *Vanajyotsnā* creeper or



the young fawn or the trees who occupied as important places as Priyamvadā and Anasūyā in her heart! With a heart torn with feelings of doubt and expectation, she stands before the King—a figure of womanly helplessness. Her attempt at reviving the memory of the King reveals her natural innocence and *naivete*; the King's ungenerous remark about the fair sex draws from her the sharp rebuke of a woman in self-defence. Duṣyanta's repudiation breaks her down; and we see her again after some years in the holy precincts of Mārīcā's hermitage. Śakuntalā the beautiful has changed into Śakuntalā the pious and serene. Her face is emaciated, she wears faded garments—she has sacrificed herself at the altar of love. With a magnanimity of which a woman's heart is capable, the innocent wife has not thought ill of her lord who has been so unkind to her, but has bided the time for the wheel of fortune to turn. Śakuntalā in the last Act is Sītā of the fourteenth Canto of the *Raghuvamśa* reincarnated.

Out of the twin friends—who are no less philosophers and guides—of Śakuntalā, Priyamvadā is buoyant and vivacious. How playfully and innocently this youthful maiden of the hermitage jokes at Śakuntalā! Once she has known that her friend is interested in the stranger, how, with cunning *naivete*, she tackles her and prevents her from going away from their midst! Beneath these pranks of hers, a loving heart lies concealed; she is much worried about her friend's ailment. She undertakes to play the go-between for the sake of her friend. Equally full of love for Śakuntalā is Anasūyā, but her temperament is rather serious. She shows almost motherly concern for Śakuntalā during her ailing condition and at the time when Durvāsa curses Śakuntalā. When their friend departs from the hermitage, these two maidens burst into tears, and feel disinclined to return to the all-vacant hermitage; and the poet, too, has chosen not to lift the veil again in the rest of the drama over the grief of these two tender figures. The elderly Gautamī is the matron in the hermitage. The young girls hold her in

respect. She reveals her motherly care and tenderness for Śakuntalā all along—but especially when she intervenes on her behalf at the time of her repudiation. Aditi's is an august figure like her husband. Sānumatī is a celestial nymph with enough sympathy for the King's misery and grief of remorse.

There is, however, one more unique character in this drama, as Tagore has aptly put it, and that is—Nature. Nature in the *Śakuntala* is not mere back-ground—it has entered into the warp and woof of the drama. Indeed, no other writer nor even Kālidāsa in any of his other works has shown or succeeded in showing that deep intimate understanding of the relation between man and nature which he has done in this play. The natural scenes and atmosphere of the penance-grove are no less essential elements in the plot than the signet-ring, why, even Śakuntalā herself. For, without Nature, *Śakuntalā* would be impossible. The tender leaves waving in the wind, the *Navamallikā* creeper twining round the mango-tree, the female-deer about to deliver, the young fawn, the peacocks, are all as much endowed with life and feeling as Śakuntalā or Priyamvadā. In fact, Kālidāsa's depth of understanding and superb imagination have succeeded in giving us characters like Śakuntalā and Priyamvadā who are—we can say—the lovely creepers in the bright penance-grove, and in endowing trees and creepers of the grove with life and feeling similar to man's. Man and Nature are here “chemically” blended.

The dramatist who conceived the purpose of the drama to be ‘the representation of the actions of men’ and started so narrowly with the palace of Agnimitra ended with the aid of the poet in him on the vast canvas of the world in the *Śakuntala*. The story of the drama, as we can now see, is as high as the heavens, as wide as the world and as deep as the human-heart. It is practically the story of human life—man's strong qualities and failings, his relations with man, his limitations arising from his surroundings, his powerlessness before forces over which he has no control, his joys and sorrows, and, through



all this travail, his ultimate emergence unto the peace and happiness that be of the soul. The story is told in terms of love and its vicissitudes. But it is so profound in its understanding of human nature and the human heart, so sympathetic in its inter-relation of the human and the non-human worlds, so sublime in its poetry that it holds the reader "for evermore" spell-bound with its beauty and significance. Goethe, the eminent German poet, has paid a handsome tribute to this master-piece of his Indian predecessor in the realm of poetry; and his appreciation is entitled to the highest respect, for, as Hillebrandt has well observed, "here the poet looks into the poet's soul". We may conclude this section with the oft-quoted but never stale lines of that German poet :

"Wouldst thou the young year's blossoms and the  
fruits of its decline,

And all by which the soul is charmed, enraptured, feasted,  
fed?

Wouldst thou the earth and heaven itself in one sole  
name combine?

I name thee, O Śakuntalā, and all at once is said."

( *Eastwick's Translation* ).

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## V

## HIS CONCEPTION OF LOVE

The definition of Art as "life seen through a temperament" is true of poetry more than most other forms of Art. While the poet draws his inspiration from the wide world around him including the innermost thoughts and feelings of man, he cannot prevent his own view or attitude—or 'temperament'—from colouring his theme to a greater or smaller degree. He may regard a particular object or theme in a particular form or conception or relation; he may have his own likes and dislikes. This temperament of his is a basic condition of whatever he feels or imaginatively creates. Gifted as he is with a penetrative insight and creative imagination, the poet does not merely look *at* life: rather he looks *through* it. He is not satisfied with appearances or superficialities; he gets behind them to the core of things to which he attempts to give expression with the aid of his imagination. The world of Shakespeare's creation is as wide and varied as the one in which we live. In his more than a score of dramas he has dealt with love, treachery, falsehood, disloyalty, nobility, infidelity, justice, mercy, generosity, integrity, heroism, gaiety and other sentiments that rise in the human breast. Thus he took the protean aspects of human life as the material from which his imagination created characters by the dozen which are an eternal delight to the discriminating reader. Behind the large variety of his creations, however, there lies the personality—the 'temperament'—of the great poet-dramatist lending them a spiritual unity and significance. Kālidāsa, too, in his comparatively far too few works, has drawn on life for his inspiration and delineated sentiments like love, piety, duty, generosity, heroism, jealousy, etc. By studying his compositions collectively it is possible to discover how he thought or felt on one or the other of the various matters that figure



in them. Much more so when we find a poet like him handling one and the same theme in practically all his works. It must be full of significance that, instead of playing the whole *gamut* of the human heart, Kālidāsa has chosen to play practically the same note—that of love—in his compositions. Not that a poet-*cum*-dramatist of his calibre could be unaware of the endless variety of possible themes for his imagination to work upon. The 'actions of men' which he postulates as the subject matter of the drama are not, as he must have well known, love only. And yet, if he has concentrated his attention upon love as his theme, he must have done so of set purpose. He must have realized the importance and fundamental character of the problem of love and must have wished to treat it as he saw it. That his works have never been accused of being 'purposeful' or flaunting a moral testifies to the success of Kālidāsa's art. Yet if we scan his works, our enquiry will be repaid with some well-defined outline of the progressive development of his conception of love. It is to this interesting question that we shall now turn.

Whether, at the time he wrote the *Rtusamhāra*, Kālidāsa had any idea save the ordinary about love it is not possible to say. The fact, however, that he sang of love in his first composition indicates that he was already attracted by this sentiment and was interested in its treatment. The *Rtu.*, as we have already seen, describes the different seasons and their influence on the hearts of lovers. As the poet essayed to describe the phenomena of Nature from season to season, he could naturally do little more than describe the outward manifestations of love. Women decorating themselves or separated lovers pining for their beloveds or happy couples basking in each other's company—this is how the poet has delineated love in the *Rtusamhāra*.

Kālidāsa could hardly have been satisfied with this utter superficiality and outwardness of his delineation of love; and his reaction is clearly discernible in his next composition—

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the *Mālavikāgnimitra*. The dramatic form which he might have selected for various reasons gave him characters—individuals—whose thoughts and feelings he could portray; this was a definite improvement upon the abstract handling of human emotions which he had tried in *Rtu*. Secondly, a lover of Nature as he was, he yet reduced Nature to the minimum in this drama. We have noted before that Nature is used in this drama only as a back-ground in the *Pramadavana* scenes. The *Aśoka* scene is a typical conception of Kālidāsa, the lover of Nature. We can well imagine various other means which might have been employed by other dramatists in order to achieve what Kālidāsa does by the conception of the fulfilling of the longing of the *Aśoka* tree. For, in a way, the *Aśoka* episode is only a symbol—a निमित्त as Kṛṣṇa would put it—that helps to bring about the—inevitable—fulfilment of the prophecy about *Mālavikā* marrying a worthy consort after undergoing serfdom for the period of a year. The conception so poetical in itself is a triumph of Kālidāsa's sense of beauty; at the same time it reveals the irresistible appeal which Nature had for him. Apart from this *Aśoka*-episode, the plot is conceived in a manner that leaves little scope for Nature in it. This must be explained partly as due to the reaction of his failure in *Rtu*, where Nature was the dominant theme.

Having thus modified his approach, the poet returned to the same theme—love. But we know that by now he had formed his own conception which distinguished love from passion :

अनानुरोक्कण्डितयोः प्रसिद्धयता समागमेनापि रतिर्न मां प्रति

परस्परप्राप्तिनिराशयोर्वै शरीरनाशोऽपि समानुरागयोः ॥

(There is no charm for me in a union of lovers one of whom is anxious and the other indifferent. Far more welcome were death when the lovers cherish equal love but have no hope of union with each other.)—this stanza voices the loftiest conception of love and is the key to an intelligent understanding of the treatment of love in the works of the poet. Love as



commonly understood is sensual and hardly distinguishable from passion. It is attracted by physical charms, craves a physical satisfaction and is consummated when so satisfied. Being physical in nature, such love may satisfy itself even in the absence of mutual feeling. For, in it the marriage is of the body and not of the heart. This love is little different from passion and can only debase man. True love—love as it should be or could be—on the other hand, springs from the heart and reckes little of the body. If it does not overlook the physical side altogether, it does not entirely depend upon it. This ideal love when requited is its own reward. No obstacles can damp it, for in its case,

‘The cloud that veileth love itself is love.’

“Till death do us part”—death may separate the two lovers physically, but it has no terrors for the hearts that are animated by ideal love. Such love which eliminated the grosser passion from itself cannot but lift the lovers above the common and ennoble them. It is an abiding sentiment which paves the way to man’s ennoblement.

With such a clear discernment between gross passion often miscalled love and love of the ideal kind, Kālidāsa attempted to delineate the love-affair between King Agnimitra and the Princess Mālavikā. We have seen, however, how the drama lacks in depth and moves on a superficial plane. This is true of the delineation of the love of the hero and the heroine. The lovers have failed miserably to rise after the obstacles and the ordeals to any height which may be called divine or which may permit their love to be called ideal. The obstacles and the set-backs which their love has to face are not soul-stirring, such as may shake them deep down to the bottom of their hearts and reveal the brilliant flame which shines within. Agnimitra and Mālavikā have remained at the end of the drama little better than specimens of ordinary mortals who, once they are smitten with love as it is commonly understood, are never at peace with themselves until they are united. The drama

could not elevate love to its divine height and failed to demonstrate the conception of love which Agnimitra—and through him, Kālidāsa—gave expression to in the stanza quoted above.

In the *Kumārasambhava*, Kālidāsa undertook to sing of the love of Śiva and Pārvatī. This is highly significant, for, it shows that the poet was conscious of the abject failure of the human characters in the *Mālavik*. to shine with the light divine as they should have done by virtue of the kind of love which the poet wished they had but they hadn't. The poet therefore straightway turned to the divine pair of Śiva and Pārvatī and thus wished success to meet him half-way. The divine nature of this pair would assure him of an easy demonstration of the sublimating influence of love ideally conceived. Secondly, the virtually insignificant part which Nature was assigned in the *Mālavikāgnimitra* is here followed by a reaction—the poet's love of Nature and understanding of its relation with man have asserted themselves. The descriptions of the Himālayan scenery, of the advent of the vernal season, of Oṣadhiprastha and its surroundings, and of sunset on the Gandhamādana mountain are not the least among the attractions of this poem. The poet has not remained satisfied with these descriptions: he has conceived the Himālaya mountain as a divine personage, has given a body and life to Spring and has not hesitated to endow feelings like love (Kāma) and pleasure (Rati) with corporeal forms. All this is an eloquent indication of the anxiousness of the poet to achieve his object by whatever means.

The *Kumārasambhava*, as Tagore has pointed out, clearly shows that love which is based on physical considerations or self-interest only comes to grief; in fact, it is not love properly so called. It is a mere passion which needs physical satisfaction. It seeks the help of physical beauty, extraneous decorations, outward setting; it would stoop to deception or stratagem in order to gratify itself. This gross passion runs counter to the law and course of human life. How Kāma brags



before Indra about his own power to disturb the penances of sages or to tamper with the married loyalty of a woman on whom Indra might have set his heart! The youthful Pārvatī who hopes to win Mahādeva's heart by her bodily charms is assisted by *such* Kāma—love of the gross kind. Kāma does not speak of bringing about a marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī; his only aim is to get Śiva interested in her. The great God who is practising penances and yogic meditation is indifferent to Pārvatī. In consequence of the momentary influence of Kāma over him, he casts covetous eyes on Pārvatī's face; but he soon regains self-control and blasts the gross passion which Kāma represented.

Mahādeva then leaves that place with a view to avoid the presence of women. The mutual attitude of Śiva and Pārvatī as depicted upto this stage is significant. While Pārvatī is longing for union with Śiva (she is therefore उत्कण्ठिता), the latter is indifferent (अनातुर) to her. Were a union of the two under such circumstances to be brought about, it would have "no charm." Pārvatī, so conscious of her beauty until now, no longer thinks highly of it. She turns her eyes within and prepares to go through the ordeal of fire for the sake of her love. She practises austere penances, caring little for her body. Thus tested, her love is purged of grossness; her passion subsides, and the light of true love shines in her heart. And what a change her outlook undergoes! She, who thought so much of her beauty, no more cares to see the deformity of Śiva. Her eyes no longer see the mere appearances; they see the unity, the identity of heart and heart between the two lovers. And now the great God comes Himself to her and offers Himself "as thy slave from today."

The *Kumār*. registers a notable advance on the *Mālavikā*. in another important respect. In the latter the love-affair of the hero and the heroine ends happily in their marriage; but there is no mention or suggestion of the object of love and marriage being the continuation of the family through the

procreation of progeny. The love of Agnimitra and Mālavikā is an end in itself. In the *Kumār.* the poet seems to have perceived the wider implications of his conception of love in relation to the family and society; and therefore he emphasises that even this spiritual love is not merely self-regarding. In its positive aspect, love should be consecrated by wedlock and ensure the stability of the social organization. This note which is heard for the first time in the *Kumār.* becomes the key-note of the delineation of love in the subsequent works of the poet. In the *Vik.* the curse of the sage Bharata is softened by Indra—and this is an invention of the poet's own imagination—so that Urvaśī was to stay in the company of King Purūravas "until he sees the face of a son" from her. The *Megh.* is an excursus on love-in-separation; and its limited plan hardly permits any reference to the ultimate purpose of love. In the *Śāk.* the chastened love of Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā in the last Act is no longer self-centred; its consummation is found in the birth of the young Sarvadamana. The same ideal finds expression in the description of the married love of Dilīpa and Sudakṣinā, of Aja and Indumatī, of Rāma and Sītā, and finally, of the tragic figure of Agnivarṇa's widow.

Therefore, although Mahādeva was propitiated, Pārvatī did not hurry to yield herself to him. She wished that her father should be approached for approval of their union and that their love should be consecrated by a formal celebration of marriage. Kālidāsa lingers lovingly over the quiet domestic scenes of the marriage. Pārvatī clad in nuptial white and wearing nuptial decoration now beamed with the nobility, the dignity and tranquility of a house-wife she was about to be. "Thou shouldst do thy duties unhesitatingly in association with thy husband Śiva," said the priest officiating at the marriage-ceremony to Pārvatī—driving home the admonition, as it were, that love is an instrument of individual and social regeneration. Kāma is brought to life again but now the scales have fallen from his eyes. He no longer defies the course



or order of life; he is purged of his grossness and, in his sublimated form, draws the divine pair of Śiva and Pārvatī to each other in the ecstacy of conjugal bliss. Out of this union was born Kumāra, the saviour of the world.

While thus the *Kumārasambhava* has succeeded in demonstrating Kālidāsa's ideal conception and purpose of love, it has not attained to the maturity of technique which is found in the *Śākuntala*. Here the poet has resorted to certain facile tricks, if we may use the word, in order to accomplish his object. For, he has begged the whole question by selecting Śiva and Pārvatī as characters whose love he undertakes to portray. Our world is full of men and women. Every man is not Śiva with his divine majesty, self-control, inner vision and ability to resist and kill passion. Every woman is not Pārvatī who, on realizing the futility of her charms, would ignore and renounce outward circumstance and seek mortification for the realization of her love. Śiva and Pārvatī are divine figures, and this very divinity places them above the human world which, although it has the possibility of the divine in it, is yet crowded with Agnimitras. If Agnimitra and Mālavikā were simple human beings who failed to rise to the poet's expectations, Śiva and Pārvatī are divine—more than human. Again, the poet, drawing upon the mythological legend of the burning of Kāma, has personified him along with other characters like Spring and the Himālaya. This resort to 'tricks' only reveals that the poet's art has not yet matured.

Kālidāsa was not possibly unaware of these drawbacks. Although he must have been satisfied that his conception of love was well demonstrated in the *Kumār.*, yet he could have been scarcely pleased with the way in which he had brought it about. Naturally, he must have yearned to demonstrate the same in the human sphere in a more natural manner. Before, however, he came to write the *Raghu.* and the *Śākuntala*, he composed the *Vikramorvaśīya* and the *Meghadūta*. The *Vik.* is remarkable for the fact that once again Kālidāsa

has tried to bring his theme to the human sphere; Purūravas is a Kṣatriya King, albeit endowed with some super-physical powers. The heroine, however, is Urvaśī, a celestial nymph, who in the drama, as we have already seen, possesses some few human traits. Kālidāsa has not been able to shake off the divine element altogether; this persistent introduction of the divine is possibly due to his conception that ideal love lights the human heart unto the divine. He tries to strike the divine chord in man by the easy process of conceiving divine characters. The love of Purūravas and Urvaśī commences at the first sight of each other; and although it is mutual, it is physical. Purūravas says to Citralekhā: "you say that that lady of lovely appearance is very restless, but you do not see (me) Purūravas pining for her. Common is this our longing of love for each other; heated iron is fit to be welded with heated iron." (2.16) Urvaśī finds her paramour more attractive of appearance when she goes out to meet him a second time. Love thus based on physical consideration cannot brook any obstacle; it is unsatiated and impatient. That is why, even after enjoying marital life for a number of years, Purūravas *could* be interested in a Vidyādhara girl playing on the bank of the Mandākinī, and Urvaśī burst into anger—and be turned into a creeper. The love-lorn King goes mad and roams about in search of his beloved. Here we see how Kālidāsa's artistic vision has grown deeper, and how, instead of the ordeals being mechanically conceived, the conflict is made psychological and the ordeals personal. In *Kumār*. Pārvatī alone undergoes suffering for the sake of her love and Mahādeva remains free from any such ordeal. Here, both the hero and the heroine go through suffering so that their love may be of even kind. After both Purūravas and Urvaśī have gone through the fiery furnace, they are re-united. Their son Āyus is brought to them and, through Indra's intercession, the two lovers remain united ever afterwards. However, the love of the hero and the heroine does not appear to shine with ethereal brilliance even after their ordeals. The self-denying attitude of queen Auśīnarī



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partakes of the divine ; and we may see in it the divine spark in the human heart which Kālidāsa was able eventually to utilize in the *Śākuntala* and the *Raghu*. with consummate effect.

In the *Megh*. the hero and the heroine are semi-divine beings, and therefore their feelings are likely to be much nearer to the human than Urvaśī's. Not only that, Kālidāsa, after having once again introduced the divine element in his characters in order to be able to show the ennobling—'divinizing'—influence of love, has eliminated the divine traits from the hero and the heroine altogether. The Yakṣa is described as शपेनास्तंगमितमहिमा (His divine powers were destroyed by the curse of his master.) Thus the characters, though technically semi-divine, are actually human—with human limitations. The *Megh*. depicts the love of the married couple who are fated to suffer separation for a year. Their love is steadfast and is only intensified by their separation. The plan of the theme, however, as we have already seen, has not permitted love to be treated in full detail. For that we have to turn to the *Śākuntala*.

Is it a mere accident that the drama, in which Kālidāsa's art and vision flowered out so luxuriantly and in which his conception of love found its most complete expression, should have as the heroine Śakuntalā who is human from the club side and divine from the distaff side? From what we have seen of the efforts made by the poet progressively to eliminate the mythological or accidental divinity of birth from his characters and to reveal the real inborn divinity of the human heart, we can hardly believe that Śakuntalā's being a child of a human father and a divine mother is purely accidental from the point of view of Kālidāsa's art. Rather it is an indication that the poet has at last succeeded in his endeavour to secure the divine strain in his heroine in a most natural manner without resorting to artificial means. It marks the end of Kālidāsa's quest after a suitable medium for expressing

the idea that the human being has within him the divine strain which requires to be developed in the interests both of the individual and the society. Śakuntalā has the peculiar advantage of having been brought up at the breasts of Nature and tended by pious hermits free from the influence of the sophisticated social world. She is in blooming youth, and, all her natural breeding notwithstanding, feels attracted by the handsome Duṣyanta when he visits the hermitage in the first Act. She confesses to experiencing feelings contrary to the life in the penance-grove at the sight of the King; and by the time the first Act ends, she has learnt to steal a glance at her lover by pretending that her bark-garment was caught in the branches of the Kuravaka.

Duṣyanta, too, indulging in hunting—a pastime which a King is advised by the Śāstras to avoid—is chasing the deer; and, as it turns out, being prevented from pursuing one Doṣa—that of hunting, he falls into another—that of woman (Strī). He is already a much-married King—which was nothing uncommon in him. But the context does go to show that Duṣyanta's interest and love for Śakuntalā was gross and based only on physical considerations as the poet has carefully tried to show by the details of his reactions at her sight. With his kindred, poetic eye, Tagore has shown how the description of the Natural setting in the first Act is also conducive to the excitement of passion. Their mutual love, physical as it was, continued to grow and each longed for the company of the other. The King accepts the invitation of the sages to stay in the hermitage and guard it against the nuisance of demons mainly, as we know, for the opportunity he hoped thereby to get to see his sweet-heart. This growing love ends by a combination of circumstances in the union of the two lovers in the third Act.

But the love of the kind so far delineated cannot be depended upon to endure, much less to ennoble the human beings and make them worthy to serve the higher ends of human life.



This love must be drained of its passion ; else it would remain ' of the eye ' and therefore self-centred. Śakuntalā's intense passion for her lover was so absorbing that she derelicted from her duties to the outside world. Durvāsas—the guest—was disregarded by her. Pārvatī whose love for Śiva was not less intense than Śakuntalā's for her sweet-heart is conscious of her duties and duly welcomes the casual visitor—the Brahmacāri ; her love was not passion that would blind her to all else save her own object of love. Urvaśī's love was physical : she flew into a rage and was turned into a creeper. The Yakṣa became remiss in his duties because of the self-centred love for his beloved and was cursed. The curse of Durvāsas is therefore a nemesis of Śakuntalā's own selfish consuming passion which needed purging. Duṣyanta's affair with Śakuntalā stood in the danger of being one more such adventure on the part of that King who had a large harem. Hansapadikā's small song which accused Duṣyanta of neglecting her after once having showered his love upon her is a warning that Śakuntalā might well share the fate of Hansapadikā at a later time. That song proclaims that the trail of Duṣyanta's love is littered with the broken hearts of Hansapadikās. The climax to such passion is reached in the great tragedy that Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā, both being in the right, are yet unable to enjoy the happiness of reunion because Duṣyanta's memory has failed him. What a tragedy of human life the poet has succeeded in presenting in this scene of Repudiation, where the lover and the beloved fully conscious about their sincerity and honesty have to grapple against circumstances which they cannot control ? And yet, as we have seen, the situation is of the lovers' own making. Śakuntalā's repudiation shatters her golden dreams, she breaks down and is carried away, as we eventually know, to the celestial regions of Mārīca's hermitage. Here she gives birth to a son and leads a life of piety and self-control. Duṣyanta, too, on regaining the ring which he had offered to his beloved bursts into remorse and repentance at the way he had behaved. His love is shown by the poet thus to

be purified of its grossness by repentance, so that even at the height of his grief for having repudiated his beloved, Duṣyanta does not neglect his duties—he orders a proclamation that he himself would ‘be the near and dear one whom his subjects might have lost’. He readily accepts Indra’s advice that he should at once march against the demons.

In the last Act, Duṣyanta arrives at Mārīcā’s hermitage after enjoying the warm welcome offered by Indra for his victory over the demons. The drama opens with his arrival in Kaṇva’s hermitage and ends with his arrival in Mārīcā’s. But what a difference between the two Duṣyantas? In the first it is Duṣyanta the King indulging in hunting and trying to kill an innocent deer. Being dissuaded, he spares the deer; but he gives up one indulgence only to pursue another, *i.e.*, woman. The natural consequence of the adventures of such a lover is the growing number of Hansapadikās. In the last Act he is ‘fresh like an autumn cloud,’ returning from heaven and beaming with the satisfaction of a duty done. The tranquil delight of his heart finds an echo in the calm and serene surroundings of the hermitage. In Kaṇva’s hermitage the waving sprouts and the couple of the Mango-tree and the *Vanajyotsnā* creeper etc. all exerted an exciting influence on the heart. Here there are golden lotuses and desire-yielding trees and slabs of priceless gems and heavenly nymphs, and yet they are all subdued by the spiritual calm that reigns over the place. Naturally Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā meet each other in such pure and serene surroundings after their repentance and mortification. The union is brought about through Sarvadamana—their child—who is the visible golden link that binds their hearts. Śakuntalā no longer possesses her maddening beauty. She is ‘clad in discoloured garments and her face is emaciated by the observance of vows.’ Duṣyanta “has faded in complexion owing to his repentance.” These physical attractions are not necessary to capture the heart. The reunion is not accompanied by any outburst of blandishments. It has the



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serenity and sincerity of a confession and is accepted as such. It is a recognition of two hearts, one by the other, which are mutually tied by the silken cord of ideal love. The King explains to Śakuntalā how he remembered everything at the sight of the ring and then offers to place it on her finger once again. Śakuntalā replies, "I cannot trust it. Let my lord himself wear it." Śakuntalā, the youthful maiden of Kanva's hermitage, needed the external token of recognition and she banked so confidently upon its use in case Duṣyanta did not recognize her. What a commentary upon the fickleness of *that* love which required such extraneous visible signs for its avowal! But the same Śakuntalā after her suffering has seen the light within and, despite her unwarranted repudiation by Duṣyanta, continued with sublime magnanimity to "practise the vow of separation" from him. When her love has thus become spiritual and transcended material considerations, she no longer requires outward tokens of recognition as before. The union of the redeemed hearts already bound in wedlock is blessed by the divine sage Mārīca and approved by the gods.

The *Śākuntala* is thus a story of the redemption of love. The first half shows the joy, the pleasure and indulgence—the 'Paradise'—which physical love brings. That Paradise is soon lost, based as it is on passion. The latter half presents the love in purgatory from which it emerges in its highest form and the peace and happiness that are of the spirit; it is, as Tagore says, Paradise regained.

Finally, the *Raghu*., too, in so far as it treats of love, is cast in the same mould. Dilīpa and Sudakṣiṇā, an adult pair—well assorted, for aught we know—see the fulfilment of their love in the birth of a son, which as shown above is the ultimate purpose of love as conceived by Kālidāsa. Indumatī is a heavenly damsel born on the earth and married to Aja. Kālidāsa has emphasised the bodily charms of Indumatī who bears a son to her husband Aja and dies in an accident. We know little about the nature of her feelings towards her lord though.

Aja's deep love is described at length. The love of Rāma and Sītā is immortalized by Vālmīki, and Kālidāsa only follows him. Rāma sent Sītā away into the forest in order to appease the people who disapproved of his receiving Sītā back into his home after she had lived in Rāvaṇa's abode. Kālidāsa has vividly presented the conflict of the king and lover in Rāma—the conflict between duty and love in which, although duty is apparently victorious, it is the deep inward love of Rāma for Sītā which triumphs. The abandonment of Sītā is a sacrifice of love at the altar of duty so that Love may reign supreme. What incandescent idealism and nobility Sītā's words of message to Rāma breathe! Rāma, too, on hearing the message was full of tears, for, "afraid of the public scandal, he had turned Sītā out of his home—but not out of his heart." When he performed the Aśvamedha sacrifice, Rāma kept a golden image of Sītā at his side while performing the sacrificial rites! In the end Sītā asks mother Earth to open out and take her into her womb, "if I have never been disloyal to my husband in thought, word or deed," and she disappears inside the earth; this may appear a strange though not unintelligible end of this paragon of Aryan womanhood. Sītā loved Rāma in life; she loves him now in 'death.' Lastly, Agnivarna the lewd king is described as a reckless debauchee who meets his end in the wake of his sensual excesses. Yet the widowed queen, who stands in line with Dhārīṇī and Auśīnarī, discharges her duty, more or less Sītā-wise, of rearing the foetus in her womb so that the race may yet live. What devotion to duty of a nameless queen who, though wronged in love by her husband, suffered for the sake of her love!



## APPENDIX A.

Below are given verses from Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita* and Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa* whose parallelism of idea and expression has given added point to the relative dates of the two authors :

*Raghuvamśa*

Canto VII, vss. 5-15.

ततस्तदालोकनतत्पराणां सौधेषु चामीकर-  
जालवत्सु । बभूवुरित्थं पुरमुन्दरीणां त्यक्तान्य-  
कार्याणि विचेष्टितानि ॥ ५ ॥

आलोकमार्गं सहसा व्रजन्त्या कयाचिदुद्वेष्ट-  
नवान्तमालयः । बद्धं न संभावित एव तावत्करेण  
रुद्धोऽपि च केशपाशः ॥ ६ ॥

प्रसाधिकालम्बितमग्रपाद माक्षिप्य काचिदद्र-  
वरागमेव । उत्सृष्टलीलागतिरागवाक्षादलक्तकाङ्क्षां  
पदवीं ततान ॥ ७ ॥

विलोचनं दक्षिणमञ्जनेन संभाव्य तद्वाञ्छित-  
वामनेत्रा । तथैव वातायनसंनिकर्षं ययौ शला-  
कामपरा वहन्ती ॥ ८ ॥

जालान्तरप्रेषितदृष्टिरन्या प्रस्थानमित्रां न  
बबन्ध नीवीम् । नाभिप्रविष्टाभरणप्रभेण हस्तेन  
तस्थावबलम्य वासः ॥ ९ ॥

अर्धांचिता सत्वरमुत्थितायाः पदे पदे दुर्निमित्ते  
गलन्ती । कस्याश्चिदासीद्रशना तदानीमङ्गुष्ठ-  
मूलार्पितमृश्रशेषा ॥ १० ॥

तासां मुखैरासवगन्धगर्भैर्व्याप्तान्तराः सान्द्र-  
कुतूहलानाम् । विलोलेनेत्रभ्रमरैर्गवाक्षाः सहस्र-  
पत्राभरणा इवासन् ॥ ११ ॥

ता राघवं दृष्टिभिरापिबन्त्यो नायौ न जग्मुर्वि-  
षयान्तराणि । तथाहि शेषेन्द्रियवृत्तिरासां सर्वा-  
त्मनाचक्षुरिव प्रविष्टा ॥ १२ ॥

*Buddhacarita*

Canto III, vss. 13-24.

तंतः कुमारः खलु गच्छतीति श्रुत्वा स्त्रियः  
प्रंथ्यजनात्प्रवृत्तिम् । दिदृक्षया हर्म्यतलानि  
जग्मुर्जनेन मान्येन कृताभ्यनुशाः ॥ १३ ॥

ताः स्रस्तकाञ्चीगुणविमिताश्च सुप्तप्रनुद्धाकुल-  
लोचनाश्च । वृत्तान्ताविन्यस्तविभूषणाश्च कौतूहले-  
नापि भृताः परीयुः ॥ १४ ॥

प्रासादसोपानतलप्रणादैः काञ्चीरवेर्नूपुरानि-  
स्वनैश्च । विभ्रामयन्त्यो गृहपक्षिसंघानन्योन्य-  
वेगाच्च समाक्षिपन्त्यः ॥ १५ ॥

कासांचिदासां तु वराङ्गनानां जातवराणामपि  
सोत्सुकानाम् । गतिं गुरुत्वाज्जगृहुर्विशालाः  
श्रोणीरथाः पीनपयोधराश्च ॥ १६ ॥

शीघ्रं समर्थापि तु गन्तुमन्या गतिं निजग्राह-  
ययौ न तूष्णम् । ह्रिया प्रगल्भानि निगूहमाना  
रहः प्रयुक्तानि विभूषणानि ॥ १७ ॥

परस्परोत्पीडनपिण्डितानां संमर्दसंशोभित-  
कुण्डलानाम् । तासां तदा सस्वनभूषणानां  
वातायनेष्वप्रशमो बभूव ॥ १८ ॥

वातायनेभ्यस्तु विनिःसृतानि परस्परोपासित-  
कुण्डलानि । स्त्रीणां विरेजुर्मुखपङ्कजानि सक्तानि  
हर्म्येष्विव पङ्कजानि ॥ १९ ॥

ततो विमानैर्युवतीकलापैः कौतूहलोद्धाटित-  
वातयानैः । श्रीमत्समन्तान्नगरं बभासे विंशदि-  
मानैरिव साप्सरोग्भिः ॥ २० ॥

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